



THE INDEPENDENT

No 3,672

SATURDAY 25 JULY 1998

(1R70p) 70p

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48-PAGE MAGAZINE



HYPNOSIS AT THE HIGH COURT

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LIFE AT THE CUTTING HEDGE

PLUS SHOPPING
OUTDOORS TRAVEL



ROBERT CAPA BRITAIN IN THE BLITZ

COVER STORY

Greenpeace tried to buy Russian nuclear bomb

GREENPEACE OFFERED a Red Army officer \$250,000 to snatch a nuclear warhead from a Soviet-controlled bunker inside East Germany.

BY STEVE BOGGAN

Advanced when the Russian officer vanished. The bomb was to have been unveiled to the media to emphasise the dangers of "loose nukes" - devices being "lost" as the former Soviet Union disintegrated.

Who the officer disappeared, Greenpeace decided not to publicise the operation. However, following inquiries in Sweden, the Netherlands,

America, England and the Arctic by the Independent, several officials have spoken about the affair for the first time.

show that loose nukes were a problem, that disarmament was necessary and that controls on existing weapons needed to be tightened up.

peace board to protect its members from charges should anything go wrong.

hands of a disintegrating Soviet Union.

British military intelligence sources have confirmed that warheads for Russian SS21 missiles were stored at Altegrabow, but they were sceptical that a senior lieutenant - and two soldiers he intended to enlist into the enterprise - could have breached security.

Battle over museum charges

ADMISSION TO all national museums and galleries is to be free within three years as part of a "new era" for culture announced yesterday by Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

BY DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

Mr Smith emphasised that he would "encourage" all national museums to be free. This can be taken to mean that they would not get a share of the extra cash if they do not scrap charges.

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teaching educational opportunities and widening access to the arts. He said yesterday that £100m of the new money would be earmarked to guarantee free admission at all national museums, including the five that charge at present.

Also as part of the spending plans, £125m of extra money over three years is to go into the performing arts - a 15 per cent increase. But the extra spending detailed by Mr Smith yesterday comes with a quid pro quo. All institutions, museums and performing arts companies will have to prove themselves to be efficient and to be attracting new audiences, he said.



Riders at the start of the 12th stage of the Tour de France protesting at 'the lack of respect' showed to them and the press coverage concentrating on the doping affairs instead of the racing

Sit-down turns race into a tour de farce

FRENCH SPORTING euphoria following the host nation's World Cup victory a fortnight ago was rapidly evaporating yesterday as the drugs scandal surrounding the Tour de France deepened.

BY PAUL NEWMAN

widespread in cycling. France has been shocked by the revelations. The influential daily newspaper Le Monde called for an end to this year's Tour. It said the race had become a meaningless contest that was preventing a proper investigation into the drugs issue.

Home Office says racist police should be re-educated

BY FRAN ABRAMS
Political Correspondent

ALL POLICE officers could be asked to take race relations courses, the Home Office suggested yesterday in its evidence for the next stage of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry.

racial crimes were often dissatisfied with the way police handled their cases.



Straw: CID race training

nity relations courses should be extended to all police officers, particularly those training to enter the CID.

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HOME NEWS Sinn Fein's role in the Belfast Assembly was questioned after the IRA was linked to a murder

HOME NEWS North London's Jewish community has been rocked by arrests for heroin smuggling

FOREIGN NEWS Keizo Obuchi, the "cold pizza" of Japanese politics, is the country's new Prime Minister

BUSINESS Nationwide announced raised interest rates, a day after a vote kept the building society mutual

SPORT Justin Rose, 17, showed superb courage to bounce back with a 65 in the Dutch Open

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Heroin scandal rocks London's devout Jewish community

BY PAUL LASHMAR

THE ORTHODOX Jewish community has been shocked by a series of arrests of its members for alleged heroin smuggling. Police and Customs inquiries are centring on a drugs link between Israel, Antwerp and London.

Evidence of the new drugs link follows:

Two Jewish men are to appear in British courts on heroin smuggling charges.

The professional execution of an Antwerp street last week of a Jewish jeweller and leading figure in the Russian Mafia.

A Talmudic scholar accused in Tel Aviv this month of laundering drugs money through his bank account.

The north London Orthodox community is remaining tight-lipped about the arrests although it is thought to be severely embarrassed.

Several people in the community, who did not want to be named, said that the arrests were causing anger and deep concern.

The involvement of Orthodox Jews in hard drugs has echoes of the recent case in New York State where the puritanical Amish sect was torn by the arrest of several younger members for drug dealing.

The Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox communities of Stamford Hill and Golders Green in north London have a reputation for being largely crime-free. While some members of the Orthodox community have been jailed in the past for large-scale VAT frauds and other white collar crime, it has never been associated with drugs or violent crime. The fact the arrests involve allegations of heroin has proved even more shocking.

Police in several European countries began to suspect that the diamond area of Antwerp was becoming an international centre for drug smuggling two years ago when an Orthodox Jewish man from Antwerp was arrested at Ramsgate.

Dror Hazenfratz, then 34, from Antwerp, was jailed for 11 years for trying to smuggle heroin. He was arrested by British Customs officers while travelling with his wife and child in the family Peugeot 405. Underneath the child seat in the back Customs officers found 15 kilos of heroin worth £750,000.

Hazenfratz, who was born in Haifa and holds an Israeli passport as well as a Belgian identity card, appeared in Canterbury court wearing traditional dress and carrying the Talmud. He had made other one-day trips to England.

Hazenfratz said he had been told to meet a Georgian Orthodox Jew at a north London hotel. The ultimate destination of the drugs was reportedly David Santini, a Glaswegian who, at the time, was Scotland's leading heroin dealer.

In an unrelated raid, Santini was arrested while repacking a £1.1m consignment of heroin. He was jailed for 13 years. A senior officer in the case said: "He had massive connections with Britain's underworld and leads to European drug cartels."

Following the arrest of Hazenfratz drugs officers began to suspect a new drugs route. The last stopping point for most drugs coming into Britain is the Netherlands, but European police forces are making it more difficult to use that country as a transshipment point.

The collapse of Communism has also opened up new smuggling routes through Eastern



Aron Alham (left) appeared in court in Tel Aviv watched, it is said, by officers of the British intelligence services. He is accused of laundering money from an international drugs ring. The car (above) used by Dror Hazenfratz to smuggle heroin, which was concealed beneath his child's car seat. Main photograph: Eli Dassa

Europe into London and Antwerp is ideally suited as a drugs centre.

At the end of June British Customs arrested a 19-year-old man from Antwerp in Dover with 10 kilos of heroin allegedly concealed in his hire car. He is awaiting trial. Shortly before an older man had been arrested at Coquelles at the French entrance to the Channel Tunnel. British Customs allegedly found quantities of heroin and cocaine. The man was an American Orthodox Jew living in Stamford Hill.

British drugs officers suspect they are seeing the beginning of a new drug operation involving Antwerp's Orthodox Jews and the Russian Mafia. The Orthodox community has been a major player in the diamond and precious metal market. Antwerp has the largest diamond centre in the world. Other centres of the diamond business are Tel Aviv and Hatton Garden, London.

Antwerp's Orthodox community is close knitted but cosmopolitan with close links with similar communities in Israel, London, New York and Eastern Europe. It is an Ashkenazi community which originated mainly from East Europe. However, over the past two years the diamond business has taken a downturn for the small trader and the trade has moved mainly into the hands of big corporations such as DeBeers. In addition, last year, police made a series of raids of diamond

businesses suspected of tax evasion and money laundering.

According to one Customs source, smuggling diamonds from Antwerp to London's Hatton Garden has been on for many years. This expertise in smuggling has now been turned to a more sinister trade. The Russian Mafia has made Antwerp a centre of its operations and has been able to use the expertise of a community that has fallen on hard times.

Last week, evidence of the violence associated with drug crime surfaced again in Antwerp. A Jewish trader in precious metals in the city, Rachmeil "Mike" Brandwain, also reputed to be a leading figure in the Russian Mafia, was shot dead. Underworld gossip has it that he had informed on another leading figure in the Russian Mafia who had been arrested in New York.

In the 1980s Brandwain had sold gold that was smuggled into Britain for a VAT fraud being run in Hatton Garden. A Customs operation codenamed "Operation Fiddler" arrested a number of men in London. Brandwain was also suspected to be a cocaine dealer.

Earlier this month in Tel Aviv, three British drugs officers were in court to see an Israeli man charged with laundering money from an international drugs ring.

According to local police, the British officers were from MI6 - the remit of the overseas arm of British intelligence was

extended to cover international drug smuggling.

Israel Aron Alham, a 38-year-old Talmudic scholar, married with eight children, was released on a bail of 8m shekels (around £1.3m). The Tel Aviv court was told that British authorities had been involved with the seizure of two boatloads of drugs, the first in 1992 with two tonnes of cocaine and one tonne of cocaine.

The shipments originated from Columbia and were heading for Holland. The second boat was seized in Portugal and a British citizen known only as "John" was arrested. He claimed that Alham had given him £48,000 to pay for the yacht. The court was told that a number of men are held by the British authorities in connection with the smuggling ring.

Alham is an Ashkenazi of the large Vishnitz sect. Police inquiries revealed that Alham was on a Israeli government grant for poor scholars to study the Talmud at the Yeshiva (theology college). He had travelled to New York and London, apparently collecting money for charity. However, Israeli police found 400m shekels (£66m) in his bank account. The account was in the Israeli religious bank which is tax exempt.

Alham admitted that he ran "a private bank" but claims that he did the laundering only for the charedim (the Orthodox). He has denied any connection with drugs dealings.

BBC apology over 'Windrush'

BY PAUL MCANN
Media Editor

THE BBC is to make a humiliating apology to the family of Enoch Powell tonight after accusing the anti-immigration politician of hypocrisy in a documentary earlier this year. In the corporation's *Windrush* series, which commemorated 50 years of immigration to Britain from the former colonies, it alleged when he was a health minister, Powell had visited British Guiana (now Guyana) on a recruiting drive to encourage workers to join the National Health Service in the early Fifties.

The programme portrayed the contrast between this trip

and Powell's later opposition to immigration, in particular his notorious "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968, as hypocrisy.

The series' makers, Pepper Productions, which is run by Independent columnist Trevor Phillips, were told before the programme went on air by two of Powell's biographers, including Simon Heffer of the *Daily Mail*, that the visit had never taken place.

The BBC says that because of a "misunderstanding" Mr Heffer's evidence about the non-existent trip was not followed up. However, after an investigation by the BBC the corporation has decided to air an apology at 8pm tonight. The



Powell: 'A tissue of lies'

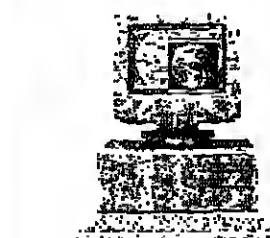
apology will go out in the same slot as the original programme.

A BBC spokeswoman said yesterday: "Windrush was an oral history of 50 years of im-

migration. The statements about Enoch Powell in the first two episodes were based on people's personal history of events. We believe that the two witnesses acted in good faith, however we now concede that there is no evidence to support what they said. We would like to apologise to Mr Powell's family for any distress caused."

Mr Heffer said: "The programme makers chose to ignore what Mr Shepherd [unofficial biographer of Powell] and I told them, and broadcast what turned out to be a tissue of lies. Only they know whether this was because what they learned did not fit with their prejudice about Powell."

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Court relives the amazing world of Paul McKenna

PAUL MCKENNA is a hypnotist and former in-store entertainer who specialises in making people do silly things.

And if you need proof that the People's Hypnotist is a very powerful man indeed, you only need to be in Court Nine at the High Court yesterday, where Christopher Gates, a French polisher, is suing Mr McKenna for £200,000.

There men in fancy-dress wigs and gowns spoke in the strangest of tongues for hours on end. It was obvious to any outsider that they were in the grip of a force that they did not understand.

Take Mr McKenna's barrister, Roger Henderson. "I expect all of that I've just said are tautologies but the Sisyphus over got to the top of the hill," he exploded at one point during his closing statement. No, he didn't and it looked as if Anthony Scrivener, for the plaintiff, might never get to the end of his statement either.

I use the word statement only because it seems polite to do so. In fact, it was more a series of thoughts plucked from the depths of a wildly coloured binder that he kept flipping through. Mr Scrivener told the judge he could have a typed version by Tuesday. Mr Justice Toulson did not look impressed.

For two weeks this court has been concerned with the case of Mr Gates, who says his schizophrenia was triggered by taking part in one of Mr McKenna's stage shows at High Wycombe in 1994.

If that sounds straightforward, little else has been, with the court delving into the most philosophical and personal of matters. At one point the judge had to retire to watch a video of one of Mr McKenna's shows

BY ANN TRENNEMAN

in which a woman had an orgasm on stage, while a man (no relation) was persuaded that he had lost his penis. There was also another man (still no relation) who was convinced he had had a baby. Even the defence seemed to concede that Mr McKenna had caused distress to the willy man.

There are other kinds of distress, however, and yesterday saw a philosophical crisis as the court pondered whether there were hidden parts of the brain. Also under scrutiny was this scenario: there is a piece of paper with the number eight on it that is shown to a man under hypnosis. He is told the paper is blank. When asked if the paper is blank, he says 'yes'. Now, the question is: was he telling the truth? Was the information stored in a hidden part of the brain? After a while, it became clear that the real answer was that we don't know.

The Moral Maze has nothing on this as entertainment but the main show under scrutiny yesterday was Mr McKenna's at High Wycombe.

This began with music from the *Thunderbirds* (Mr Scrivener remembers it well) and continued with a "helium-balloon test", in which people were asked to let their hands float up. Mr Gates's hand went up.

He was, Mr Scrivener claims, hypnotised already and bawled up on to the stage, where he became the "star of the show". This means that, for the next two and a quarter hours, he made a fool of himself.

He behaved as a ballet dancer, Mick Jagger, an interpreter for aliens, a contestant on *Blind Date*.

At one point he used a shoe

as a telephone. He was asked to imagine that he had glasses that allowed him to see other people naked. Mr Gates says much of this greatly distressed him. Mr McKenna's side disagreed, pointing out, for instance, that Mr Gates had gone to a strip show before and so was no stranger to public nudity. What on one question is that Mr Gates began to become ill soon afterwards.

That night he couldn't sleep and the next day began giggling and crying at a redundancy meeting at work. Over the next few days he is said to have laughed too much at a Freddie Starr show and acted abnormally in other ways.

He developed a fascination with *Coronation Street*, believing that he was being sent subliminal messages from the Rovers' Return commanding him to stop drinking. Nine days after McKenna hypnotised him, Mr Gates was admitted to hospital suffering from an acute schizophrenic episode and stayed in for several weeks.

Did the hypnosis trigger, or perhaps accelerate, the schizophrenia? That is the central question of the case. Mr Gates is suing for £200,000 but much more depends on the ruling, which will probably not be given until the autumn. "A conclusion would be that stage hypnosis (and other forms of television shows involving active audience participation) would cease in this country," said Mr Henderson.

In Courtroom Nine, though, the audience was on its toes. "It's not exactly dynamic, is it?" I said to one man. "No, but then Dai Narnic is a Welshman," he said. See what I mean? The Amazing World of Paul McKenna is hard to control.



Paul McKenna at the High Court yesterday, where men in wigs spoke in strange tongues

Nicola Kurtz

Bloody Sunday families stay in inquiry

THE FAMILIES of the 14 men shot dead by paratroopers on Bloody Sunday in Londonderry 28 years ago said last night that they would not withdraw from the Saville inquiry set up by the Government.

Earlier this week, the families told a two-day preliminary hearing of the three-man tribunal that they would withdraw from the investigation if they were not adequately legally represented.

The inquiry, chaired by Lord Saville of Newdigate, starts taking witness evidence in Londonderry next February.

In a reserved ruling on Thursday, Lord Saville agreed to the families' requests for five senior and five junior counsel to represent them, and that their legal team would be paid for out of the public purse.

After meeting their legal advisers to discuss the implications of the ruling, the families said they would now hand over to the Tribunal all the relevant documentary material which they had threatened to withhold. Tony Doherty, spokesman for the families, said: "There will be full co-operation with the Tribunal."

"We can only hope that that co-operation is reciprocated by the Ministry of Defence, which so far has played the situation fairly poorly in terms of its failure to contact soldiers who were in Derry on Bloody Sunday."

"They have been unable to locate any of the 1,800 soldiers, including 320 Paras, who were in Derry on Bloody Sunday, other than the 10 soldiers who have volunteered to come forward."

"At this time, approximately 5,000 witnesses have been identified and located by us and their statements will be forwarded to the Tribunal in the near future."

"We have nothing to hide and we will also forward 40,000 pages of documents to the inquiry and we hope this will be mirrored by other participants."

Disgraced football bosses return to Newcastle board

TWO DISGRACED directors of Newcastle United Football Club were yesterday restored to the board just four months after they were forced to resign. Freddie Shepherd and Douglas Hall had been pilloried after insulting the club's fans and players, and women from the North-east generally.

The news disappointed the City. Analysts accused the club's parent company of failing to match the rigours expected of a public limited company.

But such is the passion of the Geordie fans that they were seemingly prepared to forgive the directors if it improved the team's fortunes on the field. Outside the club's St James's Park stadium, Donna Jacobs, 34, said: "I know they called Newcastle girls dogs, but all I am interested in at the end of the day is how well the team do, and if this move helps them, then I'm all for it."

Steve Wraith, editor of the No 9 fanzine, said the directors should have been "welcomed back with open arms" months

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

ago. "They have always been there behind the scenes and they may as well have just come back straight away. People tend to forget they have done a tremendous amount for the club." He added that they should apologise by signing an expensive new player.

An outcry swept the city in March after the two directors were exposed by a tabloid newspaper reporter as they boasted in a Spanish brothel about using prostitutes all around the world. They mocked clean-cut Newcastle and England striker Alan Shearer as "Mary Poppins" and described Newcastle women as "dogs".

For two weeks they refused to resign, despite calls for them to quit by most of the club's fans and the Sports Minister, Tony Banks, who said: "If they knew what the word decent is they would do it."

When they still refused to go after a 16-hour meeting of the



Douglas Hall: back at helm

club's board on 24 March, Sir Terence Harrison, chairman of the parent company Newcastle United plc, and two independent directors said that if Hall and Shepherd would not resign, they would. The next day the disgraced directors stepped down.

Douglas's father, Sir John Hall, the most famous business tycoon in the North-east, returned as caretaker chairman of the club that he had re-

stored to glory. He still owns 57 per cent of the shares in Newcastle United plc.

Yesterday, William Davies, football analyst at the stockbroker Albert E Sharp, said: "I did anticipate it would happen, but did not think it would happen so quickly. A lot of family pressure has been brought to bear." He added: "It continues to show that Newcastle United has problems matching the rigours expected of a plc company. Their appointment will not baste the club's return to favour in the City."

Shares in the company are just off their all-time low of 72p, although they rose by 0.5p to 74p after yesterday's announcement. Newcastle United's stock-market value is £106m, nearly half its worth when it floated for £200m on the stock market last year.

The new independent chairman of the plc, Denis Cassidy, said: "It is the board's belief that there should now be a line drawn under the events of the past."

IN BRIEF

Safe harbour for boating couple

A DECISION to seize a couple's motor yacht, the *Winnie Riggs*, in a dispute over moving charges was ruled "unlawful and invalid" by the High Court yesterday. The decision was a victory for Peter and Patricia Frankard, who have fought a three-year legal battle with Carrick District Council, which controls Truro harbour, Cornwall.

Camilla's aide resigns over leak

CAMILLA PARKER Bowles' personal assistant, Amanda MacManus, resigned yesterday after an inquiry into the leak of information to the press that Prince William had met his father's lover.

Judge reserves Allason ruling

MR JUSTICE Popplewell reserved his ruling on former Tory MP Rupert Allason's entitlement to damages after a retrial of his defamation action against the *Daily Mirror*.

Notting Hill Carnival saved

RICHARD BRANSON'S Virgin Atlantic has agreed to sponsor the Notting Hill Carnival in west London over the August bank holiday after a deal with Nestlé collapsed.

Solicitor is jailed

A SOLICITOR was jailed for 18 months yesterday after stealing £200,000 from his legal practice.

For nearly three years Sidney Davidson, 76, who ran a practice in north London, used money from the estates of former clients to pay off mortgage arrears, other household bills and office expenses.

"He was borrowing from Peter to pay Paul," Simon Laws, for the prosecution, told Southwark Crown Court. "But the Crown say in this case that Peter was never asked and never got the money back."

Davidson, of Hampstead in north-west London, was caught after beneficiaries who should have received the cash complained to the Law Society.

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Education: Review of a decade's research confirms that girls are outperforming boys at all levels of school

Macho attitudes key to boys failing

BOYS LAG behind girls at every stage of compulsory schooling partly because of a "macho culture", says a wide-ranging study published today.

But it also suggests that girl power has its limits and that gender stereotypes persist after the age of 16, when girls still tend to opt for the subjects their mothers studied.

Boys predominate in entries to A-level science and maths while girls choose English and modern languages.

The report from Cambridge University and Homerton College details how girls have outstripped boys at GCSE level, and reviews all the research over the past decade.

"Economic change has encouraged rather than discouraged the continued presence of disaffected macho lads," it argues. Working-class boys have responded to declining job prospects by valuing sex, fighting and football more highly than their studies, according to one of the studies reviewed.

Schools need to work hard to ensure that reading is not seen as a feminine activity, that boys have male role models and that young boys are offered non-fiction to read, according to the report's authors.

Madeleine Arnot, from Cam-

BY JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

bridge University's school of education, who led the research, said that girls are "increasingly positive about their futures and more flexible about how they perceive their future lives." However, the old stereotypes still hold after 16.

The report says that there is no simple explanation or solution for boys' difficulties.

Some GCSE questions may put boys at a disadvantage because they concentrate on characters' feelings and motivation, an area where girls tend to outshine boys.

Marking at GCSE level may also work to girls' advantage because it puts more emphasis on

the technical aspects of writing than on understanding the text, and the organisation, style, grammar and spelling of boys' answers tend to be weaker than that of the girls.

Although the big gap between boys and girls dates back to the introduction of GCSE, there is no evidence that it was caused by the change of exam system. Girls do slightly better at the coursework required for GCSE but boys appear to compensate for this in other parts of the exam.

Teachers may need to bear in mind how boys learn, according to the research evidence. Girls do better on open-ended tasks related to real life that require them to think for themselves. Boys, by

contrast, prefer exercises that require correct quick answers.

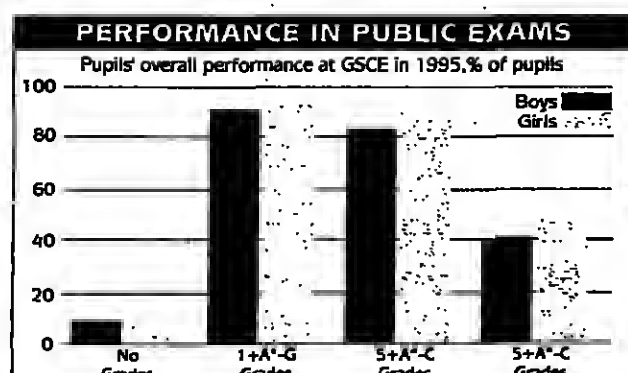
Overall, 48 per cent of girls now get five top grades at GCSE compared with 39 per cent of boys. At A-level, however, boys secure marginally more top grades.

In 1985 a fifth of girls stayed on for A-levels. Now the figure is almost two-fifths (39 per cent) compared with only 33 per cent for boys. However, girls continue to take traditional "female subjects" at A-level.

During the past decade, the gap between the number of male and female entries in physics, technology and economics has actually widened.

Ms Arnot suggested that schools should carefully monitor the relative performance of boys and girls and try to identify ways in which they could repeat with boys the success achieved with girls.

The schools minister Estelle Morris said that monitoring the underachievement of boys was a government priority. She said: "The report shows that there are many complex reasons, from the lack of male role models in primary education and often in the home, to the emphasis on good communication skills in schools—an area where girls often shine."



Sue Townsley, a part-time student, and Leeds MEP Michael McGowan at the launch of the study scheme. Joan Russell

University offers free courses to lone parents

BY JUDITH JUDD

LONE PARENTS and people who care for relatives are being offered a second career chance through free courses at the University of Leeds.

An initiative launched yesterday gives two years of free part-time study and paid expenses to unemployed or under-employed lone parents and carers who received a good education but have been unable to benefit from it because of their family commitments.

The aim of the scheme, called Optimise, is to help them back into a career in the pro-



of caring for dependants while they study.

Fifty undergraduate places will be available from this summer on the scheme which is being funded by a £50,000 grant from the European Social Fund.

Students will be entitled to study on one of more than 30 part-time programmes leading to a certificate, diploma or, eventually, a full degree.

Most are expected to opt for work-related courses such as Business Studies, Law, Social Studies, Applied Psychology or Medical Laboratory Sciences.

They will have four weeks' work experience.

fessions or business by providing tuition, work experience and careers advice. Successful applicants, who must be aged 25 or over, will receive free tuition and the cost

Italian mafia hits London art market

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE
AND TOBY FOLLETT

KEY FIGURES linked to the Italian Mafia are currently in London buying up works of art to launder money, according to an on-going police investigation.

The head of the Italian police art crime squad, General Roberto Conforti, said front-men linked to organised crime gangs had been spotted buying up items at leading auction houses.

"From the investigations we have on-going with a number of auction houses (in London) we have noticed high-value purchases from people who normally act as front-men for criminal syndicates where large amounts of money are used to buy works of art," he said.

"In these cases, of course, we are talking about legitimate works of art. It is an investment and a way of laundering money."

Italian police sources claim that while individuals could be arrested in Italy on suspicion of being linked to the Mafia, this was not the case in Britain. Police are also conscious of not simply arresting the middle man unless they can prove the links to the crime gangs.

One Italian police source involved in the current investigation said: "We know of certain large Mafia bosses who are involved in art transactions."

"They have studied British law very carefully and have managed to create a way to operate within it."

The presence of the Mafia in London is just one indication of the growing involvement of organised crime gangs in the art world. Police and experts believe criminals are increasingly using art – both legitimate

and stolen – to launder money. A Channel 4 documentary to be broadcast tomorrow examines the growing links.

James Emson, managing director of the Art Loss Register,

criminals to operate within the art world. For instance, auction houses are only advised – and not forced – to inform the police when there are large cash transactions.

Last month the Council for the Prevention of Art Theft launched a voluntary code for art and auction houses to try and protect themselves against criminals.

Auction houses were advised to check the details of the items for sale and the details of the vendors, to inform police of any suspicious and to check items with the international database.

Philip Saunders, editor of the magazine Trace, which provides information about stolen and missing works of art, said: "Most criminals will make purchases through a third party who takes a nice cut for his work."

"That way it is much more difficult to trace the criminals involved. But I believe that criminals are increasingly knowledgeable about the art market."

Charles Hill, former head of the Metropolitan Police's art and antiques unit, said the art market was very attractive to criminals.

"It is cash-intensive and it is something of a trophy crime for crooks who have moved on from stealing bub caps," said Mr Hill, now a risk manager with Nordstern Art Services.

"But it is an area in which the crooks themselves can also fall prey. Often criminals buy fakes and forgeries from other criminals."

At the moment the law provides considerable scope for

Auctioneers can't control who buys works of art

ter, an international database that contains information about 100,000 stolen works of art, said criminals had been helped by the reduction of border controls, which meant it was easier to move art without checks.

"I have no doubt whatsoever that this is happening more and more," he said.

"Whether it is just the Italian Mafia or the Russian Mafia as well I don't know. The fact is that there is an awful lot of money tied up with art and illegal activity is increasingly becoming an issue for the art world."

At the moment the law provides considerable scope for

FERGAL KEANE

In the ratings war, truth is too often the first casualty

THE WEEKEND REVIEW, PAGE 3

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Right and left take the middle ground when it comes to choosing a holiday

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE

BORING IN work and less than exciting on holiday. With a week to go before MPs pack their sun lotion and Jeffrey Archer bestsellers, ministers and MPs are finalising plans for their long summer holidays.

Next Friday is the last day of this session. But as one might have suspected of an increasingly dull and regimented Parliament, by and large MPs' choices are pretty uninspiring and a quick straw-poll suggests our leading politicians have quite restrained tastes.

The Tory leader, William Hague, and his wife, Fiona, might be embarking on a slightly unlikely white-water rafting trip to America. ("What if his sinusitis returns?" but the Treasury spokesman, Francis Maude, is content with a family holiday in France. "We enjoy the food and the weather - all that sort of stuff.")






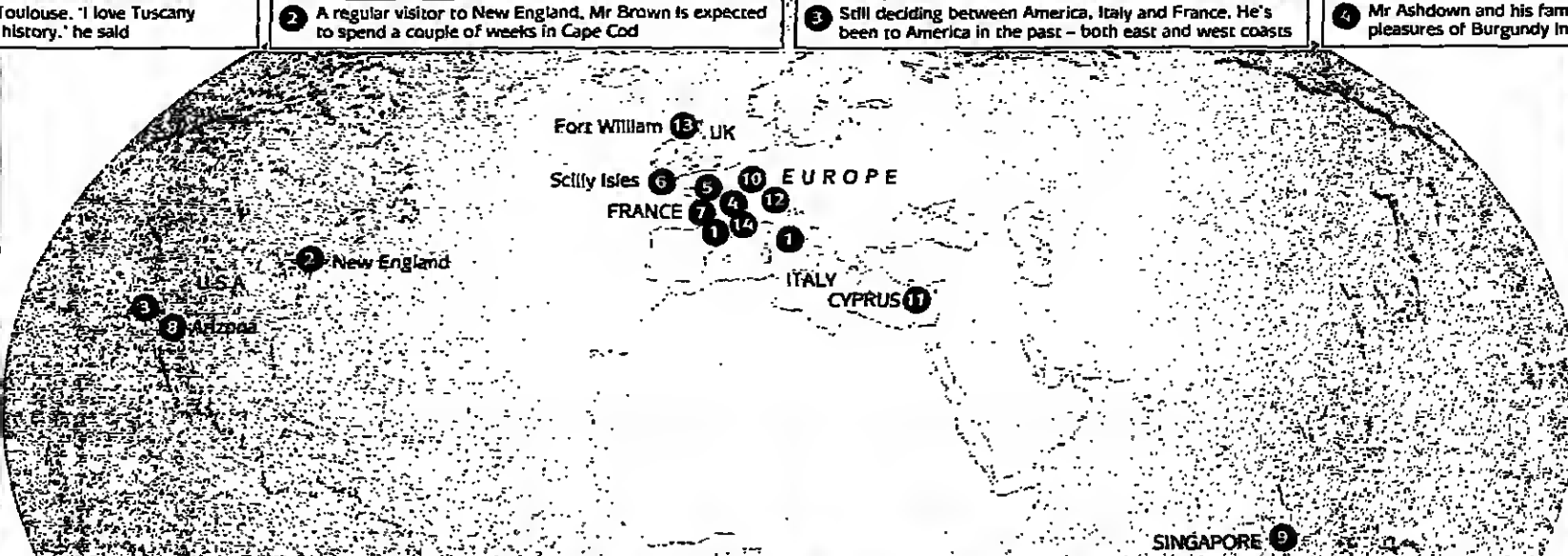

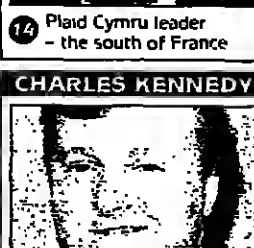
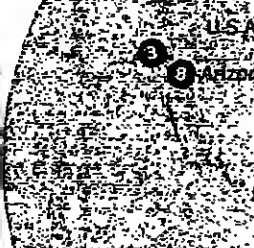





In fact, according to our slightly less than scientific survey, France is perhaps the favoured destination of the majority of MPs. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, is travelling somewhere in the south (concern for security prevents any finer pinpointing), while Paddy Ashdown will be spending three weeks with his family at the cottage he owns in Burgundy. His daughter, Kate, who married a Frenchman, is due to join them.

Plaid Cymru's leader, Dafydd Wigley, is renting a house in the south of France for a fortnight. The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and his wife, Gaynor, may also be spending some time in France.

"All I know is that they are going self-catering somewhere in Europe. Robin loves all the countries of the European Union equally," said an aide.

He will no doubt be hoping for a more relaxing holiday than he had last year when his planned trip to the United States, with his then wife, was terminated at Heathrow airport after he learnt that news of his affair with his research was about to break.

Even the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is expected to spend a couple of weeks in France,

<p>TONY BLAIR</p>  <p>1 Heading for Tuscany and Toulouse. "I love Tuscany (above). There is so much history," he said</p>	<p>GORDON BROWN</p>  <p>2 A regular visitor to New England, Mr Brown is expected to spend a couple of weeks in Cape Cod</p>	<p>PETER MANDELSON</p>  <p>3 Still deciding between America, Italy and France. He's been to America in the past - both east and west coasts</p>	<p>PADDY ASHDOWN</p>  <p>4 Mr Ashdown and his family will be enjoying the pleasures of Burgundy in their own cottage</p>
<p>DAFYDD WIGLEY</p>  <p>12 Plaid Cymru leader - the south of France</p>			<p>MARGARET BECKETT</p>  <p>5 The usual caravan holiday in France</p>
<p>CHARLES KENNEDY</p>  <p>13 At hiscroft in Fort William, with family</p>	<p>ROBIN COOK</p>  <p>12 Europe - an outdoors holiday with wife Gaynor</p>	<p>BETTY BOOTHROYD</p>  <p>11 The speaker usually opts for a beach-based holiday in Cyprus and this year will be no different</p>	<p>MICHAEL HOWARD</p>  <p>10 Still deciding which part of Europe he'll visit</p>
<p>ANN WIDDECOMBE</p>  <p>9 Singapore to visit 86-year-old nanny</p>	<p>WILLIAM HAGUE</p>  <p>8 Off to Arizona, where in the past he has gone whitewater rafting and may do so again</p>	<p>JACK STRAW</p>  <p>7 One of many MPs heading for France</p>	

staying at the Chateau St Martin D'Oydes, 40 minutes south of Toulouse. They are then to move on to Italy, staying at 1,000-year-old Tuscan estate, owned by the Prince Girolamo Strozzi.

The estate is less than two miles from the villa owned by Geoffrey Robinson, but Mr Blair has apparently decided he ought not stay there, raising the prospect of the embattled Pay-

master General could be a victim in next week's cabinet reshuffle.

Few MPs, however, will be following the example of Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, and her husband Leo, who will travel around France in a caravan. (A rather pleasant Champagne-class vehicle built by the Bristol company Baileys.)

"We travel about 130 miles

south of Paris and start touring around there, stopping off at the little villages and drinking the local plonk," said Mr Beckett. "It is simply such a nice change. We spend all the year here or else working in the constituency and it is so relaxing to go away. And yes, we do have a pretty good caravan. It's the sort that never lets you down."

Some are slightly more adventurous. The Chancellor,

Gordon Brown, and his girlfriend, Sarah Macaulay, are due to be jetting off to Cape Cod in New England, while Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, is deciding whether his holiday destination will be America, France or Italy. The Speaker of the Commons, Betty Boothroyd, expects to go to Cyprus, her usual destination, where she swims, reads and, reportedly, paraglides.

In the mean-fisted stay-at-home stakes, the Liberal Democrat MP Charles Kennedy might take some beating. "He will be spending his holiday at hiscroft in Fort William," said his assistant. "He has a lot of work to do on it and he will be there with his family."

No MP however has yet matched the plans of Ann Widdecombe. "I shall be going to Singapore to stay with my

86-year-old Chinese nanny," she said, explaining that as a young girl she spent three years living in the city state between 1953 and 1956. "I hate the climate, but I love the food and I will make a five or six-day trip to Malaysia to do some swimming."

But won't she feel constrained by those strict laws which stop people spitting, dropping litter or chewing gum in the street? "That's not going

to bother a good Roman Catholic like me is it," she said.

Not everyone is so open about their planned vacations. "Oh, no, sorry. I am not interested in that. Please ask someone else," snapped a rather stressed sounding Gillian Shepherd, the Conservative spokeswoman on the environment, transport and the regions. Poor Mrs Shepherd. Perhaps she needs a holiday.

Bishops deadlocked over gay Christians

THE Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, has promised more meetings with lesbian and gay Christians after ending his seven-year refusal to have any dealings with them.

His appearance at a drinks reception hosted by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement in Canterbury was perceived to reflect an unprecedented willingness on his part to hear the homosexual point of view.

However, African and Asian bishops yesterday made plain that they had no intention of making any such overtures to homosexual Christians.

Homosexuals are to this year's Lambeth Conference what women were to the last one, in 1988. Debates about the ordination of practising homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions threaten to split the Anglican Communion.

Bishops from Africa and the Indian sub-continent see no reason why the subject should be discussed at all. They deny that homosexuality exists in their parts of the world and refused even to talk to gays. Many American and some British bishops take the opposite view, maintaining that to deny homosexuals equal rights

BY CLARE GARNER

is unChristian. The two sides are refusing to compromise.

The Bishop of Shyira, in Rwanda, the Rt Rev John Kabungu Rucyahana, is reported to have written to Dr Carey, calling on the Lambeth Conference to ban the Bishop of Newark, New Jersey, the Rt Rev John Spong, and more than 75 bishops who share his liberal view on homosexuality, from the Anglican Communion. According to the *Anglican Way* newspaper, copies of the bishop's letter have been distributed to the 37 primates at the conference.

Dr Carey's attendance at the LGCM drinks party at the County Hotel on Thursday night followed 48 hours of careful negotiations. The Rev Richard Kirker, general secretary of the LGCM, was delighted that at last there was a chance of dialogue. "Every year since he became Archbishop we have asked for a meeting," he said. "Our efforts to meet were always unsuccessful. This made us very frustrated and called into doubt his often stated position that he was prepared to talk to lesbians and gay people. The fact was that he



Carey: More meetings

wouldn't talk to an organisation that represented them.

"I think he has now reached the point that it is untenable to keep his distance from us and he can see the merit in a face-to-face meeting. Last night's meeting was a prelude to that."

The Bishop of Truro, in South India, the Rt Rev Jason Dharma, was dismayed by Dr Carey's willingness to listen to the gay lobby. "I'm unhappy about this. I feel sorry for this. Homosexuality is the outcome of the modern world. It's

against the will of God." Bishop Dharma accused Dr Carey of being "political", saying: "He wants to be one with the people and that's not good. He must take a religious stand... all the bishops from India, Pakistan and Ceylon are against it [homosexuality]. We're just wondering why this is going on in the UK."

At the drinks party Dr Carey mingled with gay Christians and heard their "personal stories of hurt and the rejection they've experienced in church and the difficulty of proclaiming the Christian message in the lesbian and gay community because of all the hostility expressed towards them by the Church - not least by the Archbishop himself", said Mr Kirker. The Bishop of Akure, in Nigeria, the Rt Rev Emmanuel Ghorigi, said he could never do what Dr Carey had done.

"I won't listen to them, because it would be a sheer waste of time," he said.

"It's not because I'm a bigot but, as far as I'm concerned, it is against the word of God. Nothing - I repeat, nothing - can make us [African bishops] budge, because we view what God says as firm."

World Bank 'not to blame for debt'

THE PRESIDENT of the World Bank, Jim Wolfensohn, yesterday condemned Christian Aid, which blamed the bank for contributing to international debt, as "neither fair or correct".

The 20-minute video, shown to bishops at the Lambeth Conference yesterday, contained repeated criticisms of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund from aid and charity workers, as well as first-hand accounts from Jamaicans and Tanzanians about what it is like to live

BY CLARE GARNER

with the consequences of Third World debt. Mr Wolfensohn described the video as a "grave injustice". He told the bishops: "I'm not angry about the film I'm upset. I care and so do my people. We try to make the world a better place."

Roger Williamson, director of Christian Aid, said afterwards that he was "flattered to be taken seriously" by the World Bank.

"The video is saying that what's happening at the mo-

ment is not enough. The World Bank is saying that 15 or 16 of the 41 highly indebted poor countries will begin to get debt relief by the year 2000.

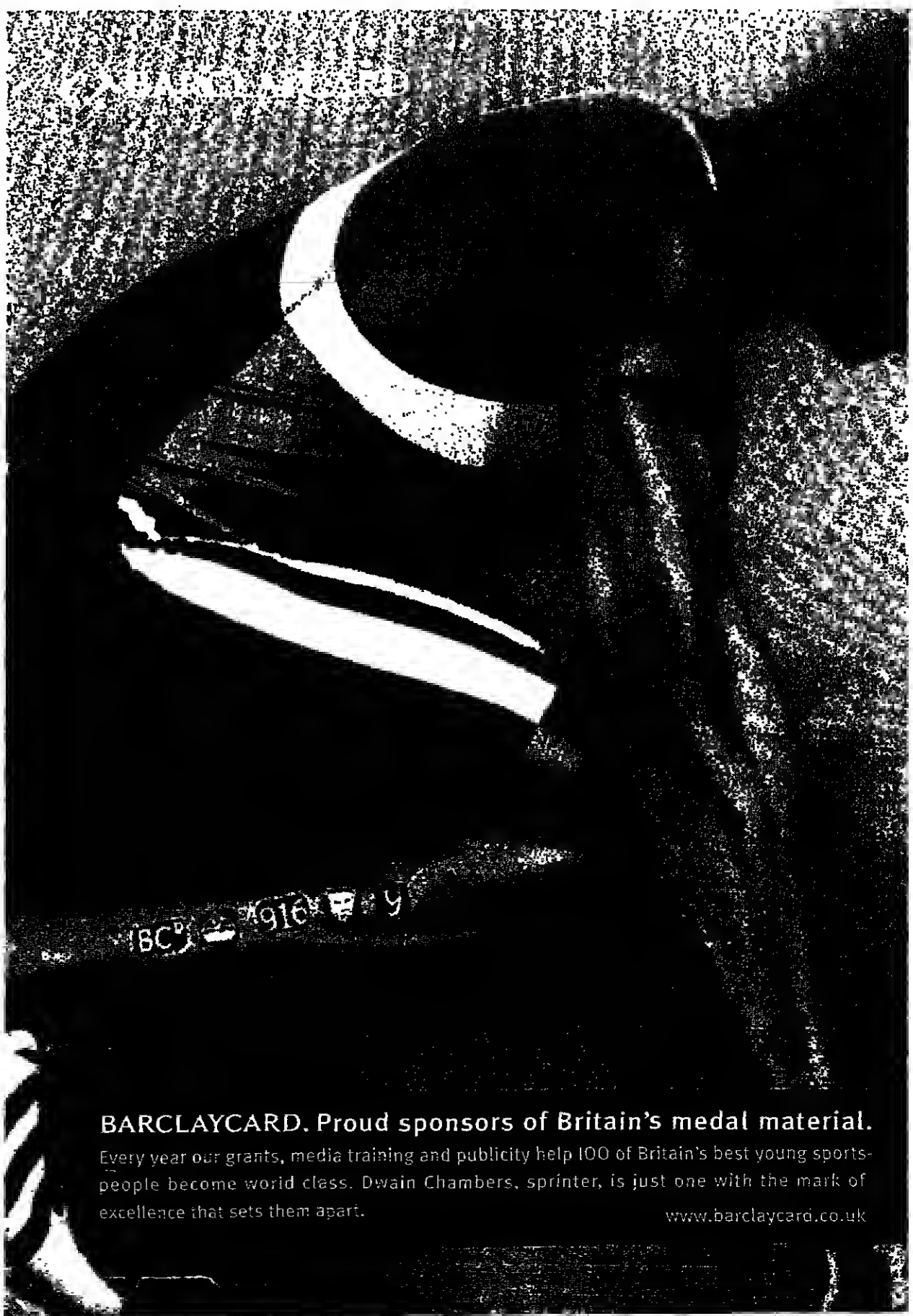
"We're saying this is not enough in terms of the debt relief being offered and the number of countries included... the proportions of the problem are enormous. We are losing the battle."

International debt was the only subject which every bishop at the Lambeth Conference, the 10-yearly gathering of Anglican bishops, agreed they

should address during the three weeks. The Archbishop of Cape Town, the Right Rev. Njongonkulu Ndungane, said that Third World debt is the modern equivalent of slavery.

"We all live in the grip of an economy which encourages over-lending and over-borrowing, an economy which drives us relentlessly into debt."

"But the poorest, those with very little income to depend on, are not just in the grip of this economy. They are enslaved by it. They live in bondage to their creditors," he said.



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Race relations chief is suspended

THE DIRECTOR of a government-backed body set up to plan Britain's future as a multicultural society has been suspended just six months after taking office.

Helen Seaford, a former senior official at the Treasury, is now taking legal action against her employers at the new Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. Two years ago, Mrs Seaford was the author of a highly controversial leaked report on Tory plans to privatise the Welfare State. The report was disowned by the then Chancellor

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

for Kenneth Clarke, who blamed it on "kids in my office".

The Independent understands that her suspension from the new commission, a body that has the personal backing of the Prime Minister, follows allegations of "managerial shortcomings".

Mrs Seaford, 39, disputes the allegations and is taking legal action against the Runnymede Trust, the charity that runs the commission.

Last night Sir John Burgh, the commission's chairman said: "Helen Seaford is suspended on full pay. There are discussions going on between lawyers representing her and the Runnymede Trust."

Rumours suggesting that Mrs Seaford's suspension had been linked to racial matters were quashed. One member of staff had made an allegation of racial harassment against her, but it was investigated and found to be groundless.

When the commission was set up

in January, Tony Blair said: "I believe... we can build a nation which respects diversity and provides social cohesion. The work of the commission is at the heart of this task." The project, which is expected to have major implications for the way Britain's social and political institutions adapt to a changing population, also has the backing of the Tory leader, William Hague.

The commission is composed of 15 eminent figures, representing a cross-section of multicultural Britain, drawn from the fields of

health, law, policing, employment, local government, education and the media.

It includes Sir Herman Ouseley, the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, and the television journalist Trevor Phillips, who has been tipped by some for the post of Mayor of London. Sir John Burgh is a former head of the British Council.

Task forces have been set up to examine the problems faced by ethnic minorities in the areas of citizenship, education, family matters,

employment and criminal justice. Their findings will form the basis for a major report due to be published by the commission at the end of next year.

Mrs Seaford, who used her maiden name of Goodman when she was at the Treasury, could not be contacted yesterday.

Shortly after her report on privatising the Welfare State was leaked it was revealed that she had applied to stand for parliament as a Labour candidate. She withdrew her application for the safe seat of

Barnsley East after the furore, although an inquiry into the leak found that she had broken no civil service rules.

After the election last year, she claimed that many civil servants under the Conservative government were Labour supporters. "Those at the top can be quite Conservative because their promotion is dependent on ministers, but public servants in the middle and bottom dislike the erosion of the public service ethos. I am sure they voted New Labour," she said.



Lionel Jospin demonstrates winning technique to Tony Blair and some children at Trindon Colliery in Co Durham yesterday

Tom Pilston

Football and face-painting, the new diplomacy

THE FOOD was a traditional pub lunch, the conversation centred, naturally, on football and it was hailed by Downing Street as a unique international event.

Quite what made it so unique was not immediately apparent, but certainly Tony Blair

BY KATE WATSON-SMYTH

and the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin seemed to enjoy themselves as they toured Mr Blair's Sedgefield constituency in Co Durham.

Mr Blair congratulated Mr Jospin on his country's success

in the World Cup without a hint of gritted teeth and the French Prime Minister agreed to give him a few pointers by kicking off a children's five-a-side match.

The two then helped to paint their national flags on two children's faces before retiring to

Mr Blair's home, Myrobella, where the talk turned to more serious topics like the single currency, the future of Europe and the restructuring of defence industries.

Mr Blair then issued an invitation to French children in teams in towns and cities

where England played and were based during the World Cup to the UK to watch top football clubs in action.

"By reaching out to young people in this way, some of whom may come from very deprived areas, I believe we can achieve a great deal," he said.

"I hope that this will be the start of ever deeper cooperation between us."

Mr Jospin, whose national team are the best in the world and certainly do not need lessons from the English, graciously accepted the invitation and said it had been

enthusiastically received in France.

Following their "traditional" pub lunch of celeriac and Northumbrian smoked cheese soup and sea bass, the two leaders downed a pint of Theakston's bitter before Mr Jospin returned to Paris.

Landmines Bill to beat anniversary deadline

THE LANDMINES Bill finished its parliamentary stages yesterday and will be on the Statute Book before next month's anniversary of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

During its last debate in the House of Lords, a former Chief of the Defence Staff said anti-personnel landmines were unnecessary in modern combat.

"Of course they can kill and maim the odd individual combatant, but motorised and mechanised troops can drive over them, and determined foot soldiers have come to take them in their stride and not be stopped by them," Field Marshal Lord Bramall said in a debate on the Bill which will ratify the Ottawa Convention.

Many former servicemen attended the committee stage, some of whom had first-hand knowledge of landmines.

Lord Bramall, a former in-

BY DAISY SAMPSON

fantry officer, told peers: "No great tactical advantage is to be gained from laying anti-personnel mines. Battles are not won or lost by their deployment or lack of deployment."

But Viscount Slim (Cross-bencher), a former SAS officer, argued that anti-personnel mines were vital for the protection of special forces.

Lord Slim, son of the wartime Field Marshal, said: "There are certain forces which work deep in enemy territory and they protect themselves with their own particular mines. It's a vital part of their equipment... a very necessary weapon that they carry for their own safety."

He added: "I think overall we are putting some of our forces, with this Bill, possibly in war or partial war, in great danger."

The Defence Procurement

Minister, Lord Gilbert, conceded there would be an "undoubted loss of military capability" as a result of signing the Ottawa Convention. But he stressed this was a "considered risk, on military advice".

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, a Foreign Office minister, said: "We have now taken a very important step in the right direction to ensuring that eventually these weapons are removed from the face of the earth."

Lord Mishcon, who was the Princess's friend and legal adviser, told peers that the Bill would "be remembered on the imminent anniversary of her tragic death as being in substantial part inspired by her deep dedication to this cause in her life which was all too short".

Lady Symons, echoing tributes to the Princess, added: "I would like to mention too the



Lord Bramall: landmines don't win or lose battles

many, many quietly dedicated and committed people around the world who have worked selflessly for the eradication of landmines either through their legislative processes or through putting their own lives at risk."

Baroness Chalker, an overseas development minister under the Tories and a trustee of the British Red Cross, said: "This is one of the best things that this House and this Government will ever have done."

The Bill completed its Lords stages and now goes for Royal Assent.

More fine-tuning for Ulster Assembly

THE GOVERNMENT agreed yesterday to look again at two further aspects of its Northern Ireland Bill, which transfers powers to the new Assembly. Unionists argued that the Government's power to dissolve the Assembly undermined the democratic process.

The Northern Ireland Minister of state, Paul Murphy, told the Commons, during yesterday's committee stage debate, that he would consult further during the summer recess.

"Our view is that we shouldn't plan for failure, we should plan for success," Mr Murphy said, but conceded: "I think we ought to take this back and have another look at it."

David Trimble, the Assembly's First Minister and Ulster Unionist Party leader, told MPs that the Secretary of State's power to dissolve the Assembly

BY DAISY SAMPSON

- if this was considered to be "in the public interest" - undermined the democratic process.

Mr Trimble said it was "fundamentally objectionable" and added: "It's treating the electorate with contempt and disdain."

Mr Murphy also pledged further consultations on the process of replacing Assembly members who died or resigned - an aspect of the legislation that had been vexing Andrew Mackinlay (Lab, Thurrock).

The minister told the House: "If a vacancy did occur, it would be filled by a substitute from the list submitted by a candidate at the June 25 elections."

But he said there was the question of by-elections being used if substitutes died or did not want to take up their place. The Democratic Unionist

Party leader, the Rev Ian Paisley, said members of the Irish Senate should be banned from standing for the Assembly.

"It would be quite wrong for a minister of the Assembly to also be sitting in the Senate of another state," Mr Paisley said. "People should give their loyalty to one place and not to two states," he added.

But Kevin McNamara (Lab, Hull North), former party spokesman on Northern Ireland, said letting members of the Irish Senate stand for the Assembly was in line with the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement.

The Northern Ireland Minister Tony Worthington told the House that the Government rejected Mr Paisley's idea saying it was up to Northern Ireland voters to choose who they wanted to represent them in their Assembly.

RSPCA attacks mass rabbit gassing

BY CAROL MILMO

THE ROYAL Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals yesterday criticised plans to use cyanide gas in a cull of hundreds of thousands of rabbits at a renowned beauty spot.

Experts at the welfare charity have called on Eastbourne Borough Council in East Sussex to switch methods for its planned slaughter on the South Downs. There are concerns that the poison could also kill rare species sheltering in burrows.

The "rabbit management" scheme has been drawn up by the local authority to control a spiralling population of rabbits which is nibbling its way through grasslands and contributing to serious soil erosion.

Councillors this week approved a scheme, scheduled to start in November, which will seal burrows and use a powdered form of cyanide to release vapours and kill the rabbits "quickly and painlessly".

But an RSPCA wildlife expert has cast doubt on the effectiveness of the poisoning method, pointing out that the gas is designed to kill not just the fast-moving rabbits but everything in its path. Foxes and badgers often use rabbit burrows, or share interconnecting tunnels, while smaller species are known to sneak into any welcoming underground nest to hibernate in winter.

Colin Booty, senior scientific officer in the RSPCA's wildlife department, said: "The problem with poisoning is that it is indiscriminate. Rabbit burrows can be used by other animals. A hole also used by badgers or foxes should be easily spotted, but species such as adders and other small rodents, which often hibernate in burrows, could easily perish."

While recognising that gassing can be effective, the RSPCA says it prefers live trapping by driving rabbits from their hideaways or setting bait as the most humane means of conducting a large cull.

The Eastbourne slaughter has been forced by a fall in the number of natural rabbit predators in the area around the town. It will take place at selected sites on a 1,000-acre section of the Downs centred on Beachy Head, which has been declared a site of Special Scientific Interest.

Eastbourne Council blames a shift in habitat, increasing use of the hills by walkers and the activities of two hunts for causing the mushrooming rabbit population. Its spokesman, Henry Branson, said: "This is not something we set out to do with relish. We have searched for the most effective and painless method of carrying out the cull and this is it."

"A GRISHAM THRILLER HAS RARELY BEEN THIS SEXY OR THIS MUCH FUN."
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THE GINGERBREAD MAN

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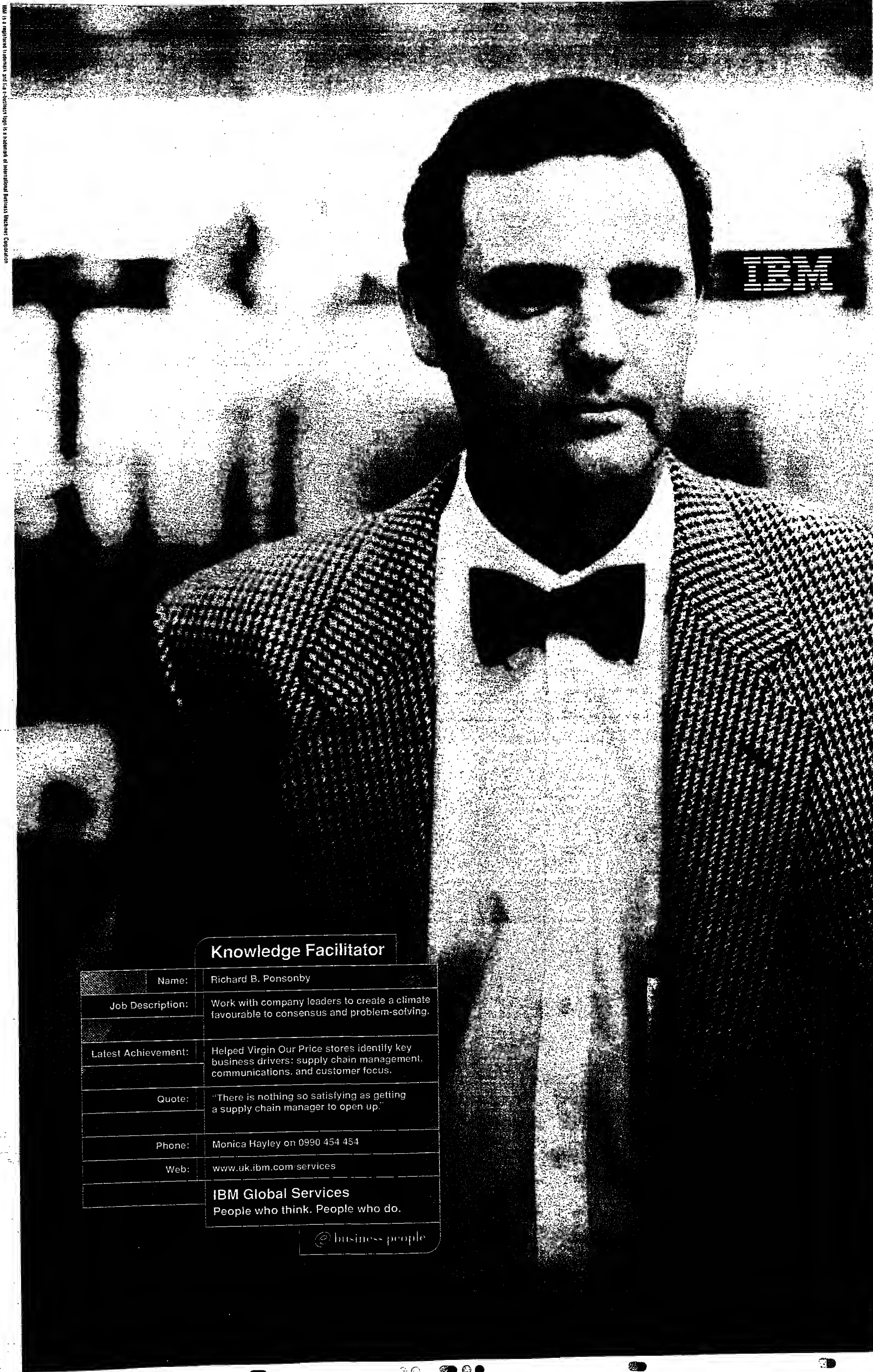
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Knowledge Facilitator

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Job Description:	Work with company leaders to create a climate favourable to consensus and problem-solving.
Latest Achievement:	Helped Virgin Our Price stores identify key business drivers: supply chain management, communications, and customer focus.
Quote:	"There is nothing so satisfying as getting a supply chain manager to open up."
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Pardons refused for war deserters

BY GARY FINN

MINISTERS HAVE refused to grant pardons for hundreds of British soldiers executed during the First World War for desertion and "cowardice".

Despite a greater understanding of the combat stress disorder known as "shell shock" and the apparent failings of the Army's wartime legal system, the Ministry of Defence has decided that to overturn findings of guilt after more than 80 years have passed would be impractical.

The decision, announced by the Armed Forces minister John Reid, follows a lengthy review of 306 executions. The ruling dismayed campaigners seeking pardons.

Mr Reid said that individual names may be considered for inclusion in books of remembrance and on war memorials, but some campaigners rejected that olive branch.

In a Commons statement, Mr Reid expressed a "deep sense of regret" at the loss of life and announced that Parliament would be invited to abolish the death penalty for military offences in the armed forces - "in peace and in war".

He added: "The point is that now, 80 years after the events and on the basis of the evidence, we cannot distinguish between those who deliberately let down their country and their comrades in arms, and those who were not guilty of desertion or cowardice."

"If some men were found wanting, it was not because they all lacked courage, backbone or moral fibre. Among those executed were men who had bravely volunteered to serve their country. Many had

'JUSTICE' AS CRUEL AS WAR

They were executed for desertion and cowardice but 80 years later some of these decisions appear as ghastly and grotesque as the Great War itself.

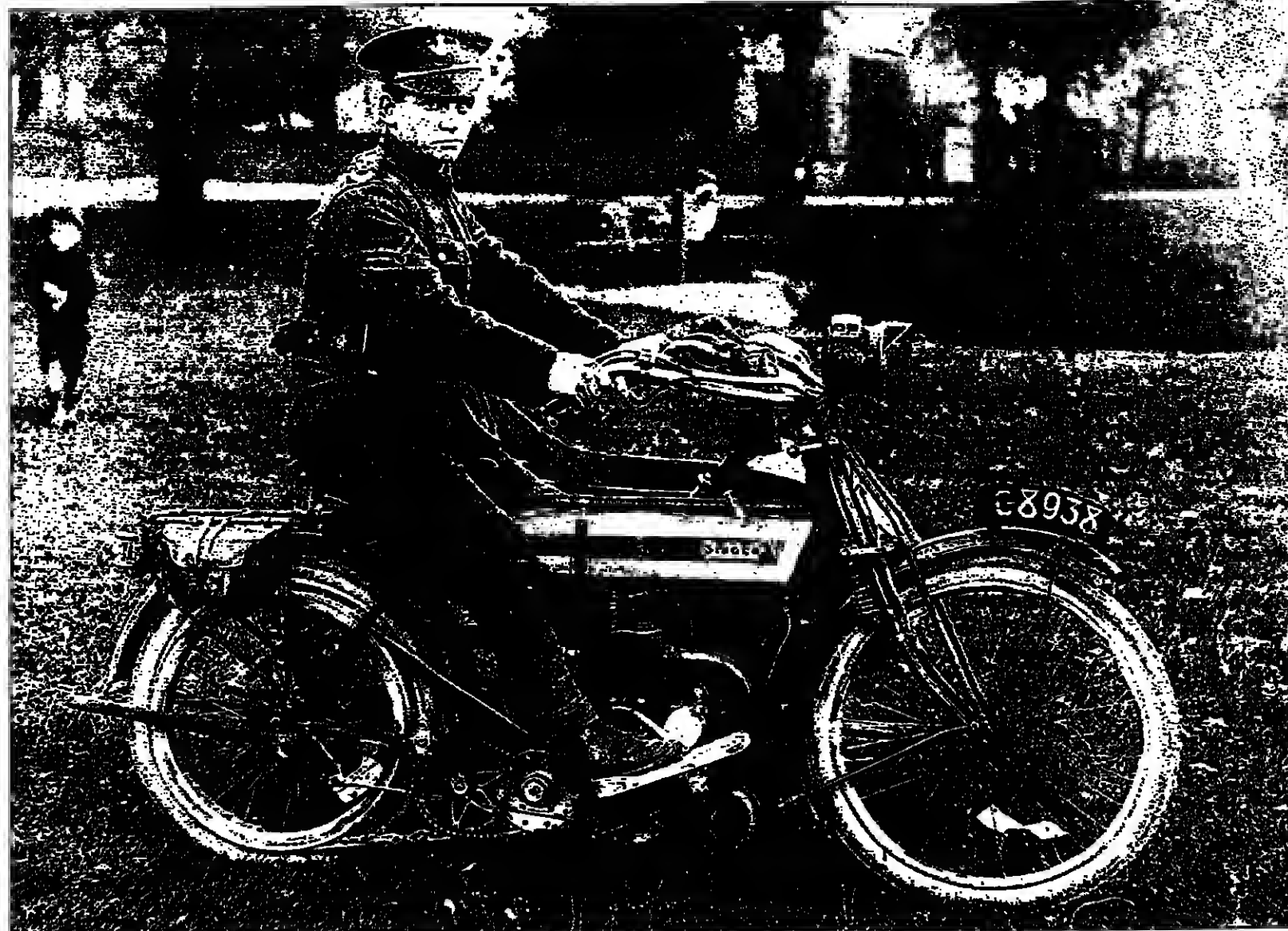
■ Shell-shocked 19-year-old, Private George Roe of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, was executed for desertion, after getting lost. Pte Roe had even asked a policeman how to find his way back to his regiment.

■ Another 19-year-old, Pte James Archibald of the 17th Royal Scots, told his comrades he "felt queer" and fell asleep in a barn while on route to the trenches in May 1916. He was found the next day and killed by firing squad.

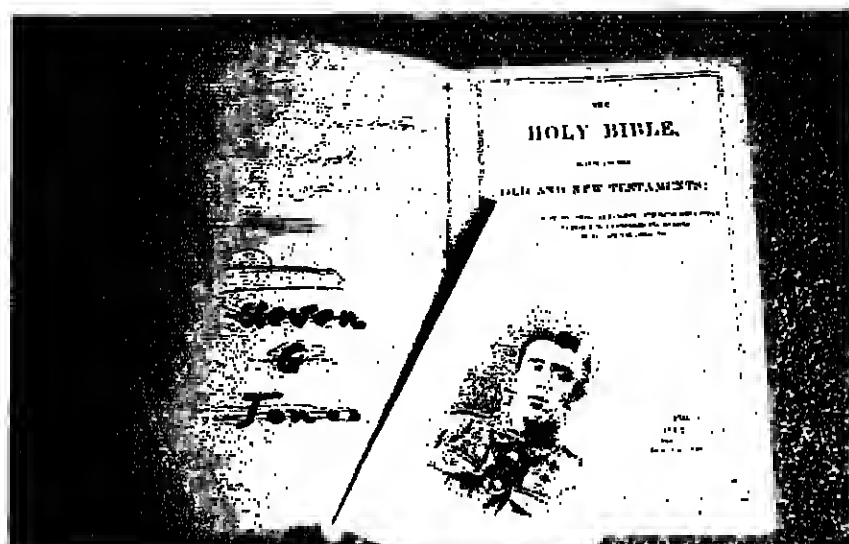
■ Pte Harry Farr, of the West Yorkshire Regiment, treated for five months for shell-shock, was returned to trenches. Four months later he again cracked up, was late for parade and executed for cowardice.

previous good and loyal service. As the century draws to a close, all deserve to have their sacrifice acknowledged afresh."

Mr Reid warned any family considering pursuing their claims for a pardon that "nothing would be worse" than if they demanded a legal review which "resulted in the re-codification of one of these men, and



Lance Corporal Peter Goggins, above, was shot at dawn with Sergeant Joseph Stones, left, after running back to British lines when the Germans attacked. Private Harry Farr, right, had a history of shell-shock but was executed after turning up late for parade.



I believe that could happen". Tom Stooes, whose great uncle Joseph Stones was shot at dawn for "shamefully casting away his arms in the presence of the enemy", said he would continue to seek a pardon.

Sergeant Joseph Stones, of the 19 Durham Light Infantry, was on a patrol which was ambushed by a German raiding

party and he jammed his rifle across the trench to stop the enemy advancing while he ran back to raise the alarm.

"This is a clear case of total injustice. I'm not giving up until I get a full pardon for him," Tom Stooes said.

Lance Corporals Peter Goggins and John McDonald also ran back to British lines with

Sgt Stones on that day in November 1916. All three were executed together.

Mr Stones added: "I think it brings great shame on to the British army, not on to my uncle. It would cost them nothing to admit that they did a really bad thing."

Yesterday's announcement followed a campaign led by

Andrew Mackinlay, Labour MP for Thurrock in Essex. "This certainly closes a chapter on a very unhappy episode as we come to the end of a troubled century," he said. "We can at least take some pride that the ordinary British soldier and other victims of the Great War have been given acknowledgement which is long overdue."

A Royal British Legion spokesman said: "Legion members will be disappointed that a full pardon is not forthcoming since, as recently as last year, at its annual conference, they resolved that in the light of current medical evidence First World War service personnel executed for cowardice should be granted a pardon."

Sacking rule could help fat cats

BY BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

TREASURY PLANS to clamp down on boardroom fat cats could be undermined by the Government's own plans to improve workers' employment rights.

As Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, considers how to prevent huge pay rises for company directors, the Department of Trade and Industry is set to give a considerable but unintentional boost to highly paid executives who hop from company to company.

Top directors are expected to be the main beneficiaries of a plan to lift the restriction on compensation for unfair dismissal, it is pointed out.

While the proposal is meant to help lower-paid people, it also offers the prospect of hundreds of thousands of pounds for directors who have been forced out of their companies.

Ironically, the point is made in a paper written by a senior manager at the Engineering Employers' Federation who is concerned about the increased burdens on business imposed by the DTT's recent "fairness at work" white paper.

The federation's employment specialist said the removal of the limit would make it far more attractive for highly paid managers to take unfair dismissal claims under employment legislation.

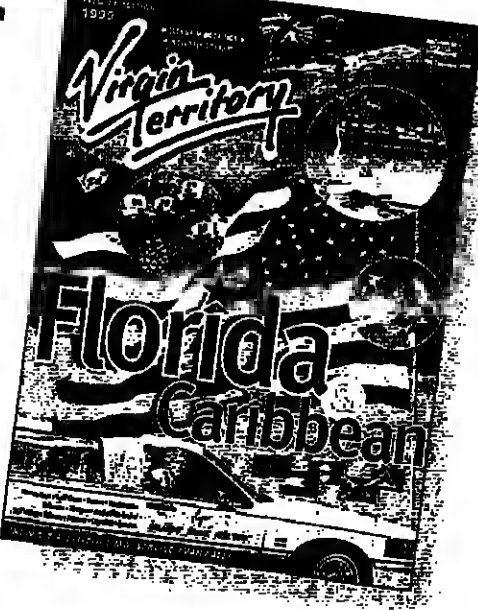
David Yeandle, of the federation said: "At a time when the Government in other quarters seems to be actively encouraging companies to reduce the length of the contractual notice period of their more senior employees, it is likely to be these employees who will be the principal beneficiaries from this proposed change."

"These more senior and higher paid employees will in the future probably find it far more attractive financially to take unfair dismissal claims to a tribunal rather than, as they do now, pursue breach of contract claims in the courts."

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Anger at biotech firm's claims to 'feed the world'

BY LOUISE JURY

AID AGENCIES have united to condemn one of the biggest genetic engineering companies for using the Third World to justify its products.

The company, Monsanto, has been seeking support from leading figures in Africa and Asia for its claims that biotechnology can "feed the world".

An advertising campaign expected to start later this year says, "Let the harvest begin". But furious aid agencies have criticised the promotion as "misleading and manipulative".

And African delegates to the United Nations' recent session on plant genetic resources asked for support in fighting the biotechnology companies.

In a joint statement, the UN delegates said: "We... strongly object that the image of the poor and hungry from our countries is being used by giant multinational corporations to push a technology that is neither safe, environmentally friendly nor economically beneficial to us."

But despite their opposition, the Global Business Access lobbying company in the United States has circulated a letter asking for signatories from the Third World to support Monsanto's claim that we all share the "same planet and the same needs".

It said: "Many of our needs have an ally in biotechnology and the promising advances it



A child drinking water at a famine camp in Ethiopia

offers for our future. We know that advances in biotechnology must be tested and safe, but they should not be unduly delayed... Slowing its acceptance is a luxury our hungry world cannot afford."

However, many aid workers believe that recent innovations in farming have promoted unsustainable agriculture and done little to help the poorest countries. Andrew Simms, of Christian Aid, said that people went hungry because they did not have access to food, not because there was not enough of it. Ethiopia, for example, was a net exporter of food during its famine when the fighting prevented produce reaching those who needed it.

"Monsanto's claims of a tomorrow without hunger thanks to their genetically engineered products are cruelly misleading," Mr Simms said.

The aid agencies are particularly worried by Monsanto, because recent acquisitions have made it one of the world's most powerful agricultural biotechnology companies. It has a stake in every stage of the process, from patented genes to a global seed distribution network. Most significantly, Monsanto paid \$4bn (£2.4bn) for Delta and Pine Land, the company which developed and patented "terminator technology", which genetically alters seeds so they will not germinate if replanted.

Fears grew further last month when Monsanto announced a partnership with the Grameen Bank, a micro-credit scheme founded in Bangladesh which provides credit to small businesses. Aid agencies fear farmers will be encouraged to buy grain and herbicides they cannot afford.

Liz Hosken, of the Gaia Foundation

which works to preserve biological and cultural diversity, said the poorest countries were being targeted as potentially profitable markets.

A £1m advertising campaign launched in Britain last month was designed to persuade people that genetically modified crops were safe and a force for good in the Third World.

Ms Hosken said: "The fear is if you say something often enough people think it is true." She said the major issue for developing nations was food security - having locally grown food locally available. But terminator technology stopped farmers collecting seeds for use in the future while encouraging them to buy in seeds and herbicides.

Laura Kelly, of ActionAid, said Monsanto's efforts to convince the public that its technology would benefit farmers were "morally abhorrent".

However, a spokesman for Monsanto said yesterday: "We are not saying that biotechnology is a panacea. It is one of the ways in which we can feed people and has a role to play."

Although the company had bought the terminator technology, it had no plans to use it, he said. "The technology is fairly complicated. The idea that farmers in the Third World are about to get sterile seeds is not true." He added that the information campaign was planned with other biotechnology companies.

Judges asked: Are you a Mason?

JUDGES CAME under pressure yesterday to admit whether or not they were Freemasons after leaders of the secret society rejected government requests to divulge membership details.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, has "invited" sitting judges to volunteer information on their Masonic status

to be entered into a public register.

The Government has already made it a condition of appointment for people working as judges, magistrates, or in the police, prison or probation services to declare whether they are Masons. But this is the first time sitting members within the

criminal justice system have been asked to give details.

The request follows the refusal of the United Grand Lodge to hand over details of members after clashes with the Government over the right of Masons to maintain their secrecy. The register, to be issued this autumn, will enable judges to say whether or

not they are Masons. If they decline to answer, this will also be logged.

In a letter to the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Lord Irvine said: "I believe that any substantial 'non-co-operation' could create a suspicion in the minds of the public and weaken confidence in the judiciary."

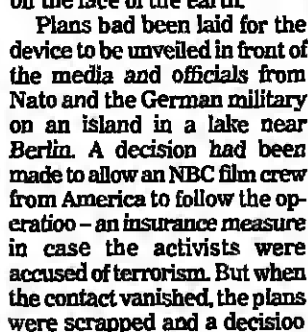
**Sacking
rule
could
help
fat cats**

"From there," said Mr Arkin,



Or perhaps Mr Arkin's initial contacts hold the key. He said "Greenpeace bosses were willing to pay if we achieved our goal, but there was a lot of nervousness that we were working with people in the intelligence community."

Was the officer simply a fantasist? Maybe he was genuine, but perhaps Greenpeace's communications were picked up by the intelligence services.



— THE WEEKEND REVIEW, PAGE 5 ➤

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Japan's 'cold pizza' steps into top job

KEIZO OBUCHI, a man known as the "cold pizza" of Japanese politics, secured the job of prime minister yesterday when he was decisively elected leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

The 61-year-old foreign minister won 225 out of the 411 votes cast, easily surpassing his two party rivals. The LDP's parliamentary majority means that his formal election as prime minister at a special session of the Japanese Diet at the end of the month is in little doubt.

He faces enormous challenges in tackling the country's economic crisis, and in inspiring a public which regards him with a mixture of boredom and contempt.

An opinion poll in yesterday's *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper showed the LDP's approval ratings at a record low, and surveys in the days leading up to yesterday's election con-

BY RICHARD LLOYD PARRY

tently showed that the new leader is less popular among the public than his rivals.

Mr Obuchi's whole career has been directed towards the party, and in Japanese politics that is still what matters most.

The vote, broadcast live on national television, took just 37 minutes. By the end the winner had secured more than twice the 102 votes of his closest challenger, the septuagenarian party stalwart, Seiroku Kajiyama. The 56-year-old health minister, Junichiro Koizumi, an outspoken reformer, came last with 84 votes.

Japan's outgoing prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, resigned a fortnight ago after the party's humiliating losses in elections to the Diet's second chamber. As the leader of the LDP's biggest faction, Mr Obuchi was always favourite to

succeed him. He first became a Diet member in 1983, at the age of 36, inheriting the seat occupied by his father before him.

His first, minor cabinet position was in 1979. After another decade consolidating his support behind the scenes, he served as the LDP's secretary-general in 1993.

Mr Obuchi is known as a quiet, pleasant but ineffectual man with no special qualifications for saving the world's second-largest economy. Even by his own reckoning, he is eclipsed by more powerful men within his party. He once described himself as "a noodle shop among skyscrapers".

"Just because Keizo Obuchi appears on the stage," he observed yesterday, "it won't immediately change society."

The perception of Mr Obuchi as smiling but ineffectual appears to be causing concern within the Japanese govern-

ment. After an American analyst was widely quoted as comparing him to a "cold pizza", foreign ministry officials remonstrated with foreign journalists based in Tokyo.

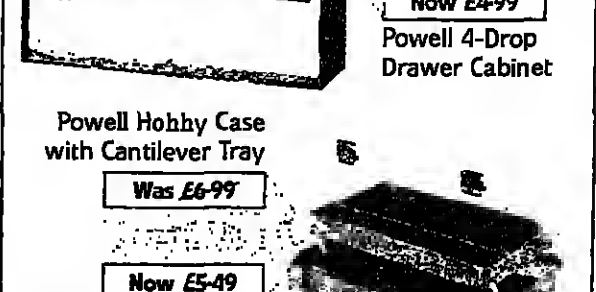
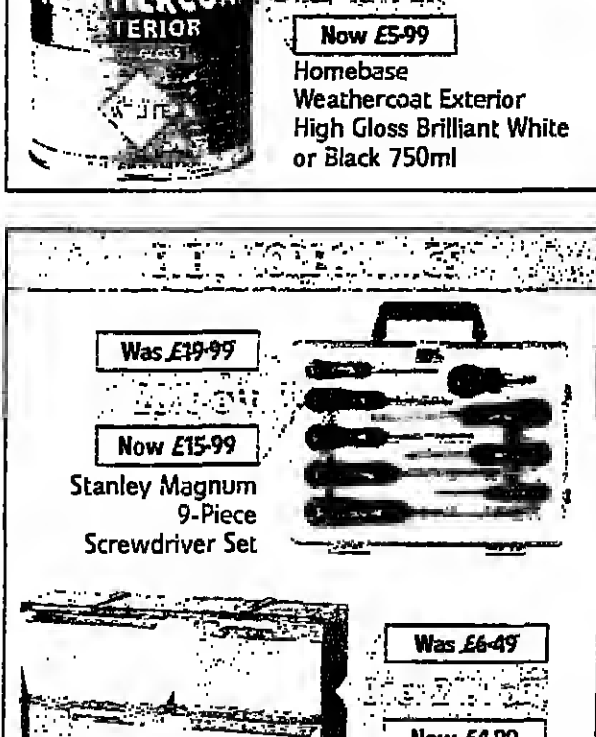
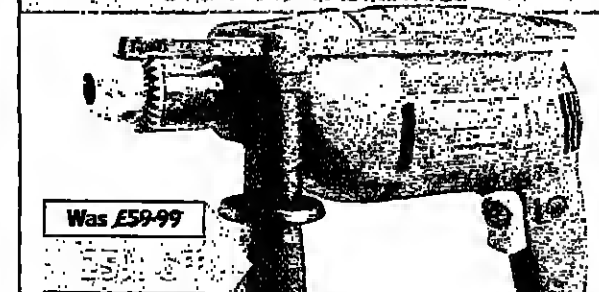
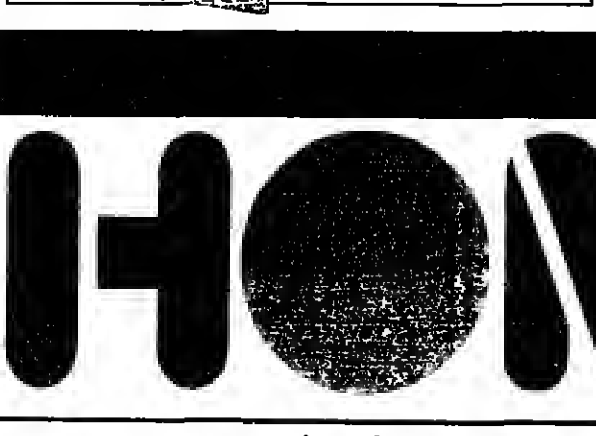
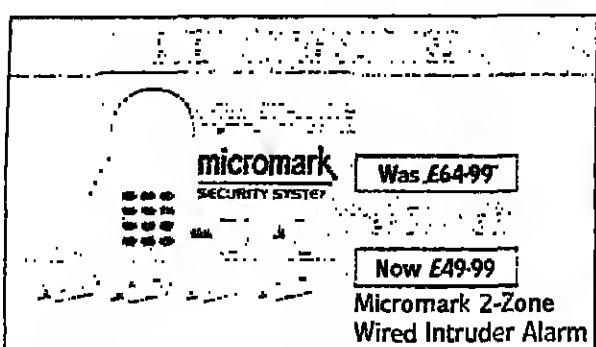
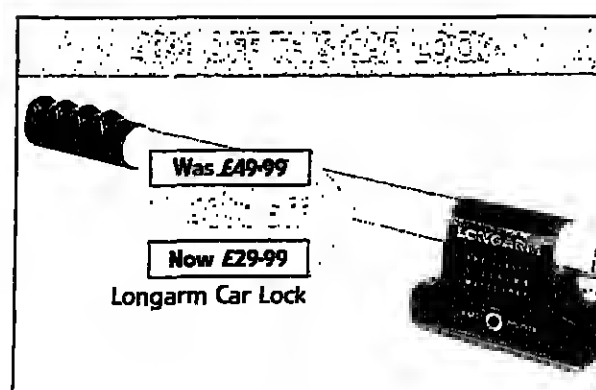
Few Japanese prime ministers have faced such political and economic dangers as Mr Obuchi. For much of the year, Japan's stock markets and yen have been falling. Bankruptcies are rising, and unemployment has risen to a post-war record of 4.1 per cent. Banks are facing possible collapse under the burden of bad loans worth at least 84 trillion yen (£365bn).

He has said he will quickly carry out a programme to restructure the crippled banks, cut taxes by 6 trillion yen and spend 10 trillion yen in public works programmes to inject money into the economy and encourage spending. "In a sense we are starting from zero," he said yesterday.



Keizo Obuchi, right, the newly-selected president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party with the two other contenders, Seiroku Kajiyama, centre, and Junichiro Koizumi, following the vote yesterday

THERE'S NO BETTER VALUE



Fears of new war in Horn of Africa

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

ALARM IS growing in Western capitals that Ethiopia and Eritrea are gearing up for a new round in their war in the Horn of Africa, their arsenals replenished by a hinge of recent small arms purchases, mainly in the former Eastern bloc.

Western diplomats have been accumulating evidence that the two are buying large quantities of small rifles, grenades and ammunition in China, Ukraine and Bulgaria. The logical implication is that the hostilities which were suspended - but by no means forgotten - after the United States and Italy six weeks ago helped broker a suspension of reciprocal air attacks, could restart soon.

The ostensible bone of contention is half a dozen pockets of arid land claimed by Addis Ababa but which Eritrea says belong to it under land borders drawn up when the country was colonised by Italy in the late 19th century. Land-locked Ethiopia's real strategic goal, however, may be to regain an outlet to the sea at Eritrea's second port of Assab, close to the border with Djibouti and lost when Eritrea won independence from Ethiopia in 1993.

The two countries are among the poorest in Africa, but according to reports yesterday, Ethiopia has been buying guns and ammunition from China, while Eritrea has been getting similar equipment from Bulgaria and Ukraine. With

Ethiopia demanding withdrawal from its territory before peace talks begin, and Eritrea refusing any concessions, the stage looks ominously set for large-scale ground fighting in the coming months.

Small and poor countries engaged in costly and ruinous wars are nothing new in Africa, but this one has especially dismayed the West. Not only do the stakes in a conflict which has taken hundreds of lives seem almost absurdly trivial, but the leaders involved - President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea and Meles Zenawi, the Ethiopian Prime Minister - have been seen as models of a new breed of African statesmen, receptive to new ideas and capable of regenerating their countries' feeble economies.

Even so, the combined efforts of the West and neighbouring African states have been unable to produce a peace formula. And the flow of arms to the region only serves to underline how, despite all the solemn international pledges to restrain arms sales, weapons are readily available to anyone who has the money to pay. Britain and the European Union may have codes of conduct for arms exporting, while the US has suspended all military sales to the belligerents. But this only leaves the field clear for the arms salesmen of former Eastern Europe, where the one legacy from Soviet era translatable into precious hard currency is an arms industry.

IN BRIEF

Bank compensates Nazi slaves

DRESDNER BANK, one of Germany's biggest banks, paid \$45,000 (£27,000) in compensation to 10 former slave labourers at a Nazi weapons plant. The recipients were among 1,600 concentration camp prisoners sent to work in the Frankfurt Adlerwerken. Dresdner held a stake in the company.

US aid for Russia's nuclear sites

UNITED STATES Vice President Al Gore yesterday pledged \$3.1m to Russia to help fund the conversion of its closed nuclear research cities to civilian roles. Nuclear co-operation is one of the main issues on the agenda of Mr Gore's talks in Moscow with Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko.

Arrested Serb twins 'abused'

THE BOSNIAN Serb twins mistakenly arrested by Nato as war crimes suspects were physically abused during their detention and will sue for damages, Bosnian Serb police said yesterday. Miroslav and Milan Vucicevic, 26, were snatched on Wednesday from Prijedor by Nato peace-keepers only to be released a day later.

1907 champagne recovered

SWEDISH and Danish treasure hunters raised a wooden ketch with a cargo of champagne sunk by a German submarine in 1916. By yesterday, about 400 bottles of 1907 Heidsieck & Co champagne had been recovered. The Swedish ship was carrying about 4,000 bottles destined for the Russian tsar's army in Finland, when it was sunk.

Wigs avoid scarf ban

SALES OF shoulder-length, synthetic wigs have shot up as female Islamist students in Istanbul try to cover their hair without breaching a university ban on Islamic-style headscarves. The wigs are sold to students who want to keep their hair covered but still attend classes.

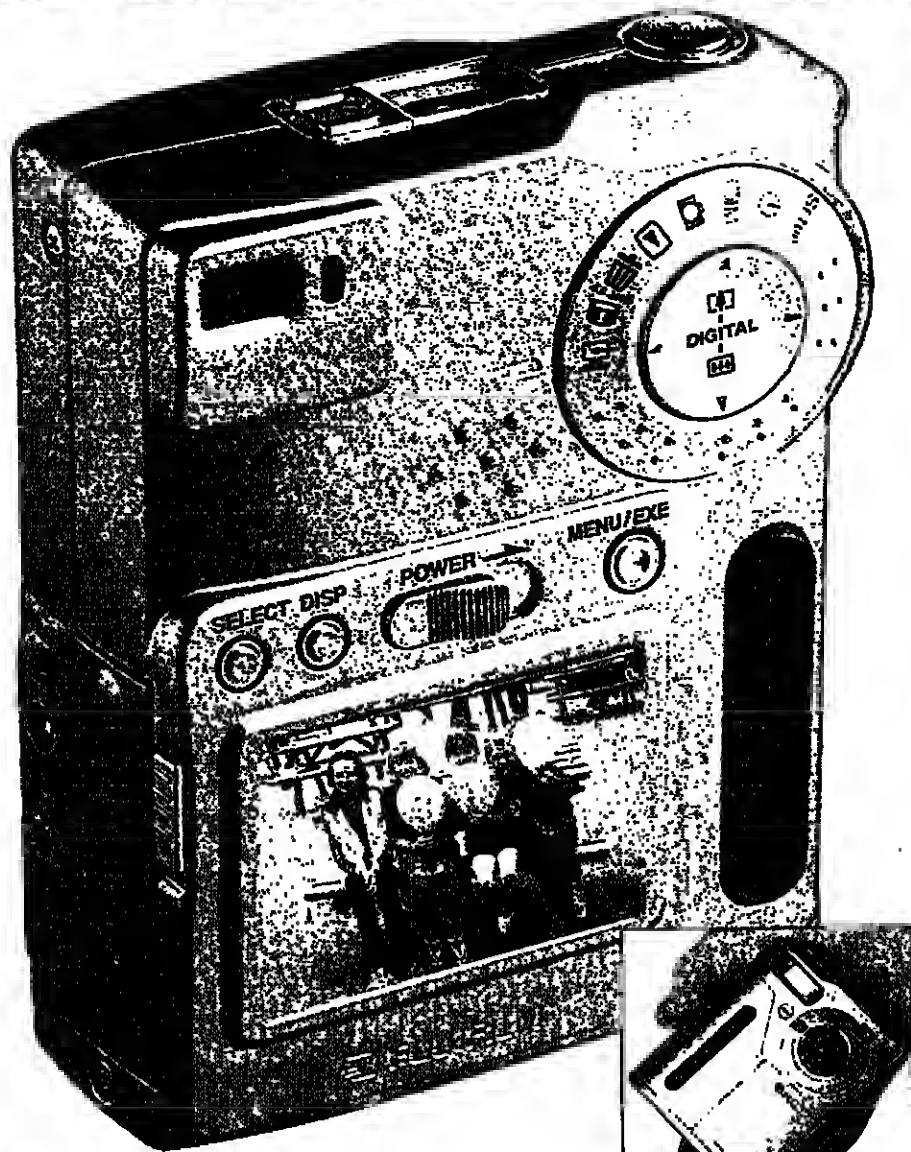
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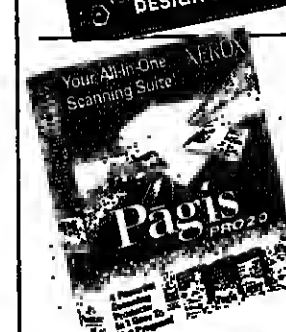
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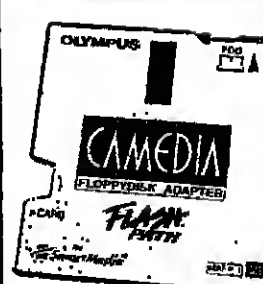
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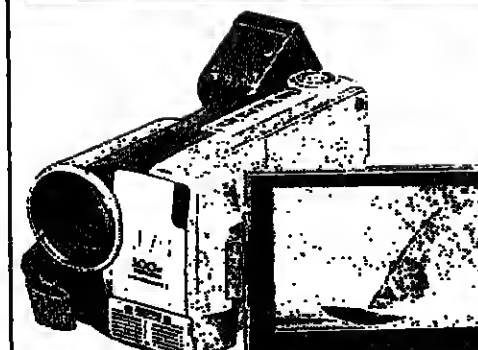
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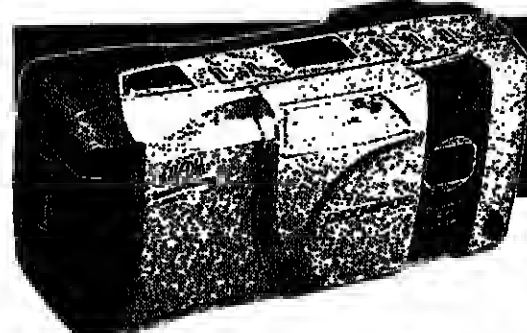
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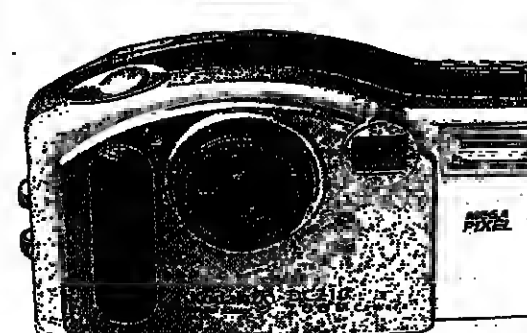
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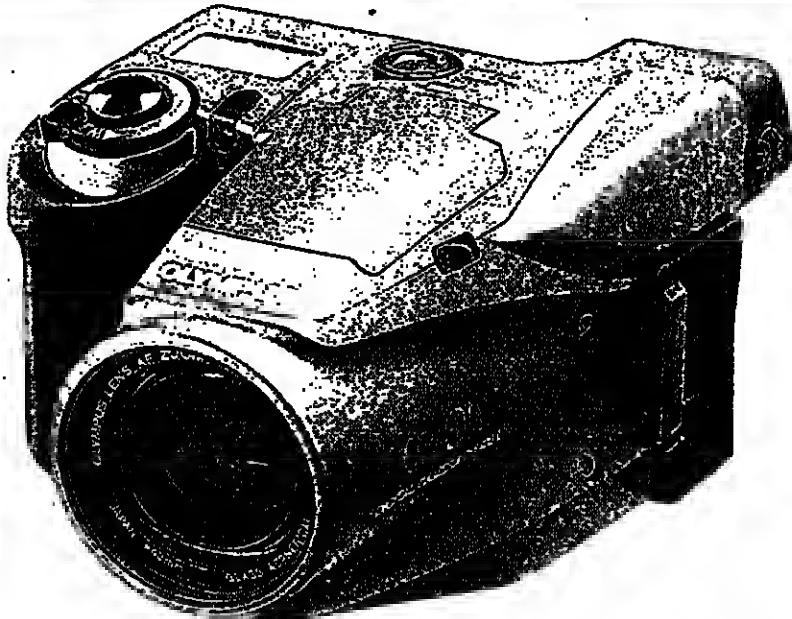
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TELFORD NOW OPEN

Russian taxman to citizens: please give generously

"LOVE THE high life? Learn to love paying tax." Not surprisingly, that moralistic slogan, pasted all over Moscow, fell pretty flat.

But the Russian tax authorities have had hardly more success with television cartoons of cavemen making sacrifices to their gods, or the advert of the man unable to have sex because he is worrying about getting caught by the tax police.

The truth is that Russians, long cynical towards a state that

BY HELEN WOMACK
in Moscow

has often abused them, have yet to discover the ecstasy of being taxpayers.

Soon they may have to, as the government is showing a new determination to fight non-payment of taxes, a root cause of Russia's economic crisis. As evidence of this, President Boris Yeltsin stirred himself at his holiday cottage in Karelia this week and signed a law that

will hit some of the worst offenders, the rich New Russians.

No longer will they be able to hand over a suitcase of cash for an apartment, dacha, yacht or limousine, for the law requires retailers to report all sales worth more than \$20,000 (£12,000). The authorities will then check that the buyer paid tax.

Russians are past masters at finding loopholes in laws. "I imagine there will be a lot of purchases for \$19,500," joked one Western tax lawyer in

Moscow. But each new measure forces tax evaders to twist and turn more to get out of paying and the authorities are hoping that in the end most people will simply find it easier to pay tax.

The luxury tax law is part of a drive to enhance revenue launched by the government to meet the requirements of the International Monetary Fund, which has again bailed Russia out. Before starting its summer recess, the State Duma, or lower house of parliament, ap-

proved most of Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko's proposals for raising income. The rest, which failed to win deputies' approval, will now be imposed by presidential decree.

Ordinary Russians will find their tax burden becoming heavier, as well as the rich. Statistics showing that only 4 million out of 60 million Russians have filled in tax returns do not give the full revenue picture, as employers automatically deduct tax from millions of

employees on modest salaries.

These are the workers who will now, whether they like it or not, have to forego another 2 per cent of their wages to build up the national pension fund and head off a pensions crisis. "We are asking you," said Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Sytyev, "to think of it as an act of charity to the old person living next to you."

Poorer Russians will also be worst affected by VAT increases on all goods except ba-

sics like bread and milk and certain items for children.

Against this background, oil companies that complained they would not be competitive unless they were allowed tax breaks got little sympathy. Anatoly Chubais, Russia's negotiator with the IMF, told them to stop whining and to pitch in with everyone else.

Almost every evening, Russia's new chief tax collector, Boris Fyodorov, appears on television advocating the need to con-

tribute to society. At the same time, viewers are shown tax police in black masks raiding the premises of major evaders.

Word has it that just as in Soviet times, people are being encouraged to inform on their neighbours to bring in more tax.

In all this activity, one thing is puzzling. Way back in the spring I made a tax declaration, but the state has not taken me up on it. I am willing to hand over my money. All the tax man has to do is come and get it.

Angolan civil war set to flare again

THE ANGOLAN government has accused Unita, the rebel movement led by Jonas Savimbi, of abandoning the country's peace process and has publicly predicted an imminent "return to war".

Angola's National Assembly this week passed a resolution declaring that Mr Savimbi had broken the 1994 Lusaka Protocol, the United Nations-brokered peace agreement which ended 20 years of civil war.

In its strongest attack on Mr Savimbi since the beginning of the peace talks, the government accused the rebel leader of withdrawing his representatives from the negotiations and hinted that it might expel his party from the Government of National Unity, set up by the Protocol. It also threatened to use force against Unita unless it fulfilled the terms of the agreement.

But the threats against Unita appear to have come too late. While the attempts are made in Luanda, the capital, to restart the peace process, in the countryside the war has already begun.

Over the past two months Unita - the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola - has seized 68 areas from government control. Fighting all over the country, but especially in the diamond-rich north, has forced more than 200,000 refugees to flee their villages and move to cities and towns.

Maria, 14, and her 12-year-old brother sit in a makeshift bamboo hut in Kaala, central Angola, exhausted after a 20-day march through the bush. During the three-week journey the pair, who were among hundreds of people who walked from their

BY CAROLINE LEES
in Kaala, central Angola

village, lived on maize and roots and drank foul water from streams.

The teenage girl cried as she explained how her village was attacked and everything of value was taken - cattle, sugar, even her family's field of maize, which was about to be cultivated, was hacked down by the attackers. The soldiers, who were heavily armed even demanded that the village chief remove his new shirt before he was allowed to run away. Nobody from the village knows who ransacked their homes, only that they were uniform.

In a pattern repeated all over the country the government blames Unita for attacks on villages and Unita blames the police, or "bandits".

Like many of the refugees who have fled to the relative safety of the provincial towns in the last few weeks, Maria and her family had only recently moved back to their village after the war, believing that the cease-fire set up by the Lusaka Protocol would last.

Their confidence has proven misplaced. Military observers working for Monua, the UN special mission in Angola, have confirmed that both sides have broken the ceasefire. Observers have reported that men between the ages of 18 and 35 are being forcibly recruited by both the government and Unita and that both sides are operating training camps for new recruits.

"They have confirmed that the government troops and weapons have been building up in key areas in the central

highlands - Unita's traditional power base in the centre of the country where Mr Savimbi is based. Monua has also reported cases where Unita forces have received death threats and midnight beatings. A number of those who received anonymous threats have reportedly been murdered.

Monua has already withdrawn its observers from 19 areas it described as "too dangerous" to remain and has threatened to leave the country unless peace talks resume by 15 August. "If there is no improvement in the situation, we will go. There is little point monitoring ceasefire which does not exist," said one observer.

Recent UN sanctions against trade with Unita are widely believed to have achieved little except to strengthen Mr Savimbi's anger towards the organisation, which he has accused of backing the government.

Unita's claims that the UN is biased against it were reinforced recently when a UN soldier entered a town under Unita control wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the government's logo on the front and the UN's on the back. The soldier was beaten and warned that if he ever returned to the area he would be killed.

"We think the international community wants Unita to disappear," said Brigadier Horacio Junjivili, who has been Unita's sole representative at the peace talks in Luanda for the past two months. He was pessimistic about the chances of re-opening the negotiations. "I am tired and depressed," he said "There are difficult times and it is going to get worse."



Buddhist monks praying for a peaceful election at the Independence monument in Phnom Penh yesterday

Reuters

Intimidation mars Cambodia poll

TWO HUMAN rights groups said yesterday that intimidation and violence in Cambodia mean that this weekend's elections will not be free or fair.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, in separate statements, urged the international community not to give approval to tomorrow's national polls solely on the basis of limited monitoring.

The groups said a neutral political environment had never been established for the polls, and the electoral process was flawed by violence and intimidation against the opposition.

Demelza Stubblings of Amnesty International said

that political killings and threats have soared since Cambodian strongman Hun Sen ousted Prince Norodom Ranariddh as his co-premier in a coup a year ago, but that on an international level "many people are not prepared to say what is happening here".

Killings and attacks on members of the opposition have continued during the one-month election campaign, she said, and human rights workers are inundated with reports of threats or other forms of intimidation against those who oppose Hun Sen or his ruling party.

"Activists have been intimidated, politicians have been

threatened, party agents have been shot and killed, and prisoners have been illegally arrested and badly beaten by policemen while held in detention," Amnesty said in its statement.

Hun Sen has called the elections to try to win back legitimacy and aid lost after his violent takeover, but has been accused by his critics of rigging the electoral machinery in his favour and using fear, murder and intimidation to ensure that his Cambodian People's Party wins.

Unlike the 1993 United Nations-sponsored polls, which were backed by 20,000 foreign peacekeepers, tomorrow's vote

is being organised by Cambodia. But the UN and foreign countries have donated the bulk of the \$34m (£20m) costs and have sent 678 observers to assess whether they are credible.

The United States, which has called the process fundamentally flawed, is at odds with other entities, particularly the European Union, which say the elections are the best way of returning a degree of political stability.

The Joint International Observer Group (JIOG) said in Phnom Penh that while there had been no serious incident during campaign rallies, "unresolved killings have taken

place in a climate of impunity that have so far not been dealt with... this must be taken into account as well as numerous intimidation of voters and party officials".

"A sudden and massive increase of the accreditation of apparently untrained observers has given cause for serious concern," added JIOG spokesman Sven Linder.

"Despite these serious concerns, the JIOG today feels justified in anticipating that reasonable conditions exist for an election... that can be broadly representative of the will of the Cambodian people," he told a news conference.

- AP

Arms firms invade Eastern Europe in search of contracts

THE RACE is on for the arms industry's most lucrative new market: the three former Warsaw Pact countries now rapidly preparing for Nato membership next spring.

Lined up on the starting block are weapons manufacturers who have launched a public relations and lobbying blitzkrieg to win multi-billion dollar contracts to kit out the former Communist states of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic with state-of-the-art military technology.

"Ask anyone in Hungary, Poland or the Czech Republic if they want a Soviet MIG 29, or an American F-16, and the answer is obvious. The question is whether they can afford them," said Peter Felstead, editor of *Jane's Intelligence Review*.

"This is a new market for arms manufacturers. The countries who will join Nato will want to operate along Nato lines and to be Nato compatible, so they will want Western equipment. Russian equipment might be cheaper but I wouldn't want to rely on Russia, Ukraine or Belarus for spare parts."

Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic are judged the most politically and economically advanced nations in Central and Eastern Europe. The three are set to join the European Union early next century.

Nato membership demands not just the most advanced weapons systems, but also compatibility with those already in use by member states.

BY ADAM LE BOR
in Budapest

"There may never be such a major sales opportunity again. Joining Nato means everything must be renewed and there are a lot of military needs," said Tibor Vidos, a lobbyist in Budapest for Lockheed Martin, manufacturer of the F-16 fighter plane.

Arms companies hope that by getting a foothold in Central Europe in the first round of buying, they will be able to lock the new member states into being customers for decades. The principle is the same whether a customer is buying a tank or a tube of toothpaste, say defence analysts: establish brand loyalty as soon as possible and keep out the competition.

How much the expansion will cost member states is unknown, as the methods of calculating vary and depend on whether or not current military budgets are taken into account.

Arms manufacturers must now compete for markets in the post-Cold War world, where the Soviet threat that justified the existence of the American military-industrial complex has vanished. Central Europe offers immense potential profits.

"There is intense competition going on now for these three markets. Western firms are very well connected and they know exactly what is going on in Nato planning, and they know these countries need new land weapons, new air weapons and air-defence systems," said



Soviet-made MIG 29s are cheaper than Western aircraft, but they are not Nato compatible

Fulcrum

one Western defence analyst.

The hardest fought battle is for fighter planes. All three states plan to replace their ageing fleets of Soviet MIGs with Nato-compatible fighters, at a cost of \$25-30m (£15-21m) per plane.

In Budapest, aerospace manufacturers are expecting the Hungarian Defence Ministry to offer a \$1bn tender for as many as 30 fighter planes. Several rival manufacturers have set up bases from where they run planning and lobbying operations to woo politicians and military officials, trying to win the lucrative tender when it is announced.

Hungary uses Soviet era MIG fighters for air defence, a plane many analysts consider still performs well, although its electronics are outdated and supplies of spares cannot be guaranteed.

Russian arms manufacturer Rosvooruzhenie has offered to

modernise the MIGs for between \$100-150m. But lobbyists working for Western firms claim it is not a viable option.

"With Hungary joining Nato it needs a defence capability that is Nato compatible and not dependent on sources outside," said Tibor Vidos.

In the Czech Republic, McDonnell Douglas-Boeing has purchased a stake in Aero Vodochody, the national aircraft manufacturer, to give the company a head start over its rivals. Czech officials have also expressed an interest in buying around 30 fighter planes.

It is not only the multi-nationals that will profit from Nato expansion. Smaller hi-tech firms are also targeting Central Europe. "There are a lot of opportunities in central Europe, especially for co-operative projects by small independent companies such as those specialising in optics, weapons sighting systems and

computer simulation," said the Western defence analyst.

The sometimes parlous state of the post-Communist economies means that financing the deals can be problematic. Governments and manufacturers have evolved a system of byzantine "offset" deals that impose complicated conditions on the manufacturer.

For example, some of the weapons parts may have to be made in the purchaser country, or the manufacturer may be required to buy something back from the purchasing country. But many local critics say that the money would be better spent on social and welfare projects such as schools, hospitals and rebuilding the region's infrastructure rather than spending millions of dollars on military equipment.

In Romania, a controversial \$1.5bn project between the defence ministry and US-based Bell Helicopters to produce 96 Dracula attack helicopters is under fire from the Finance Minister Daniel Daianu, who has threatened not to sign government guarantees for the plan.

Earlier this year the International Monetary Fund said that the government should reconsider its financial priorities and spend funds on health, education and structural reforms rather than the helicopter.

The row is an embarrassment for Romanian President Emil Constantinescu, who this week visited Washington, where he appealed for US support for Romania's Nato membership.



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Archie Gottschall, 80, checks the remains of his burnt corn crop near Frederick, Oklahoma. The Midwest has suffered temperatures up to 38C for weeks, and the heatwave has been blamed for 130 deaths. J Pat Carter/AP

Search for wave victims halted

A WEEK after three tidal waves struck the coast of north-west Papua New Guinea, the authorities yesterday decided to abandon work on recovering bodies, seal the region off and allow the dead to stay where they once lived.

Most of the dead from the waves that hit on the evening of 17 July are stuck amid debris in the Sissano lagoon next to the Bismark Sea, where several villages were wiped out. In tropical heat and high humidity the task of recovering them has become a nightmare and a health hazard, as wild dogs, sharks and crocodiles invade the area to feed off the bodies.

The authorities have decided to complete a search for survivors in the jungle and mangrove swamps behind the lagoon using helicopters and ground sweeps with specially trained dogs flown in from the United States. Then engineers

will blast a second opening from the lagoon to the ocean in the hope that the waters will flush themselves and nature will eventually take over.

Australian officials, who have been co-ordinating the relief effort with the Papua New Guinea government, said yesterday that 1,500 people were known to have died in the tidal waves, or tsunami. About 5,200 survivors were in care centres and 700 people were in local hospitals and a field hospital set up at the town of Vanimo by the Australian defence forces.

There are no firm figures on how many people lived in the disaster zone, but most estimates put the number at 8,000-10,000. On yesterday's figures, this would mean that up to 2,600 people could still be unaccounted for. If all are pre-

sumed dead, the final death toll would be more than 4,000.

But there are hopes that many of the missing could still be alive. Over the past few days, people who were hiding in the mangrove swamps and jungle behind the coast have started to come out. Some had wounds infected with gangrene, and by Thursday morning Australian doctors at Vanimo had to amputate limbs from seven people, including an eight-year-old boy.

Several other countries have come to Papua New Guinea's help with medical teams and cash, including New Zealand, Britain, Canada, France, Japan, the US and Fiji. Australian companies and people have donated more than \$1million (£380,000) through charities.

The Papua New Guinea government, led by Bill Skate, has come under fire over its handling of the crisis. Over the past

year, the country has suffered economically from drought and the impact of the East Asian economic turmoil, and Mr Skate has been accused of skimping on disaster aid. The west Sepik district, where it occurred, is one of the country's most remote regions, and has little infrastructure capable of handling earthquakes and tsunamis which have struck before. The latest was the most devastating in human cost.

The public radio station at Vanimo had been off the air since last October due to funding cuts. *The National*, the leading daily newspaper, attacked the government for letting the country's disaster relief service run down.

"Australian medical teams were on the ground in Vanimo before PNG officials got there," it said. "What is the use of having an emergency office if it is not able to respond?"

Polygamy 'is constitutional right in US'

BY ANDREW MARSHALL

POLYGAMY may be protected by the US Constitution, according to the Governor of Utah.

Though it is illegal, several communities in the predominantly Mormon state continue to practise it, and the state generally turns a blind eye. "It's clear to me that in this state and many others, they have chosen not to aggressively prosecute it," Mike Leavitt told a news conference. "I assume there is a legal reason for that. I think it goes well beyond tradition."

The Constitution's First Amendment protects the right to religious expression, and that may cover polygamy, some constitutional experts argue.

Mormons settled Utah 150 years ago as a refuge from religious persecution, and polygamy was an important part of their faith. However they outlawed it in 1890, and it was a condition of Utah's entry to the United States in 1896 that the state constitution banned it. But that has not stopped a

number of the small Mormon offshoot communities from continuing the practice.

In the past few weeks the local paper, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, has highlighted a number of cases where polygamy has caused other problems. A 16-year-old girl was beaten by her father after running away from her polygamous uncle, to whom she had been married; and another community has been revealed to subsist largely on welfare payments. It is perhaps no coincidence that the *Tribune* is in a circulation war with the *Deseret News*, its Mormon-owned rival in the city.

The Governor said that the criminal aspects of the cases needed to be dealt with, whatever the status of polygamy.

"What needs to be cracked down, if there is to be such a crack-down, is any abuse of people's civil and human rights," said Governor Leavitt, a Republican.

"Whether that happens inside or outside of those organisations or cultures, it needs to be dealt with quickly."

Iran missile test no bar to talks

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

PRESIDENT BILL Clinton said this week's Iranian missile test would not be allowed to derail the cautious US rapprochement with Iran.

If deployed, Mr Clinton warned, the medium-range missile could change the "stability dynamics" of the whole region, but went on: "I don't think it's an argument for closing off all opportunities for rapprochement."

Washington has been engaged in a tentative opening to Iran following a US television interview given by Iran's new President, Mohammad Khatami, at the beginning of the year.

On Thursday, the White House and State Department

confirmed that Iran had successfully launched an 800-mile range Shahab-3 missile that would be capable of reaching three of Washington's major allies in the region, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Defence analysts in Washington and London concurred, however, that the rationale for the test was likely to have been defensive rather than offensive in nature and predicated on a perceived threat from Iraq rather than Israel.

Alleged Russian sales of missile technology to Iran have been a point of contention between Washington and Moscow, and last week the US imposed sanctions on nine Russian companies, accusing them of secret technology sales to Iran.

Arson case retrial

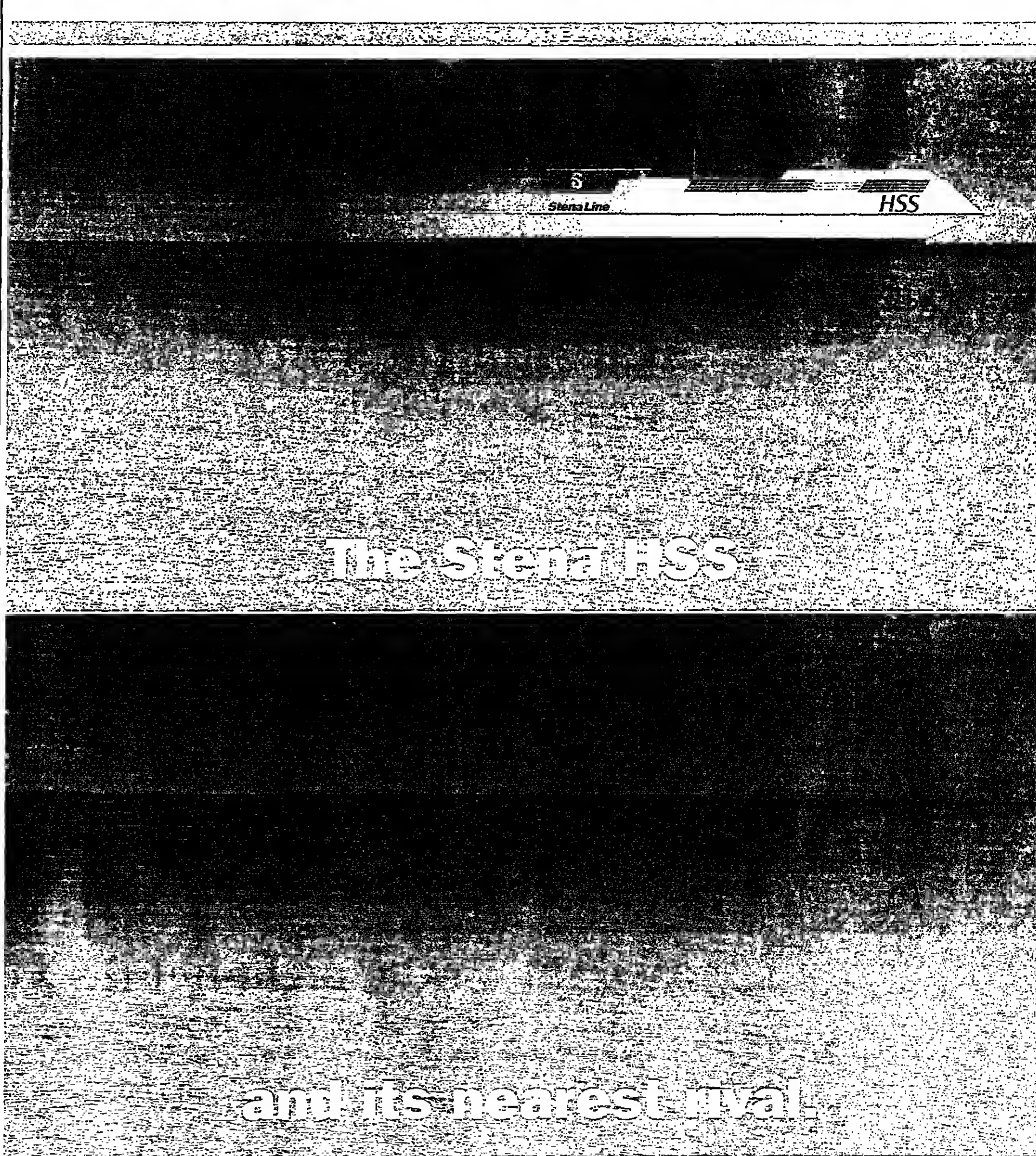
A GERMAN court ruled yesterday that a Lebanese man cleared of starting a fire that killed 10 asylum-seekers in 1996 should be put on trial again.

The Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe said Safwan Eid, found not guilty in an earlier trial because of insufficient evidence, had to be retried in the light of evidence obtained by prosecutors by eavesdropping on his conversations in jail which had not been allowed in his first trial.

The court ruled that the Mr Eid's conversations, made when he was in investigative custody, could be monitored and used in court. The family of one of the fire victims had appealed to the court to allow the evidence. Ten foreign asylum-seekers were killed and 38 people were injured in the January 1996 fire, which was the worst ever on a foreigners' home in Germany. It raised fears of a renewed wave of neo-Nazi attacks.

DAVID USBORNE

One theory goes that the request for the separation gave Rupert Murdoch a sense of liberation. He has not looked better for years



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Stena Line

The next generation of ferry companies

Breaking taboos: Soap operas modelled on British favourites are changing Afghan and Kenyan attitudes

Taliban lose out to daily dramas

BY JASON BURKE
in Peshawar, Pakistan

THREE TIMES a week the 120 characters of *New Home New Life* - Afghanistan's hit soap opera - have to face mine explosions, rocket attacks, epidemics, earthquakes, murderous blood feuds and the sheer unending drudgery of scraping a living in one of the poorest, and most violent, countries in the world.

Their hair-raising daily routine comes courtesy of BBC World Service Radio who, assisted by the Department for International Development and a range of international aid organisations, broadcast the drama throughout Afghanistan and western Pakistan to an audience estimated at between five and fifteen million.

It is designed to entertain and to educate. Every episode is saturated with useful information supplied by dozens of aid organisations. Advice on health, hygiene, mine avoidance, sanitation, environmental conservation and other subjects are all seamlessly woven into dialogue and plot.

But *New Home New Life* has another, less obvious objective: the careful and deliberate exposure of an ultra-conservative society to modern, Western values. "There is a covert agenda," admitted the deputy director of the drama, Obaidullah Mehaq, "and it is progressive and liberal."

One key theme tackled by the soap is the liberation of women. In Afghanistan women are often prevented from working outside the home, denied education and made to wear the traditional burqa - a head to toe cloak with small holes to breathe and see through.

The *New Home New Life* writers have created a young woman called Gulalai who has trained as a nurse despite fierce opposition from conservatives in her village. She now works in the village clinic where she has saved a number of babies' lives to everyone's great delight.

"So we have a very sympathetic character going against tradition and everyone ends up better off. The message is clear," said Mehaq.

"We push things as far as we can but only to the extent that it is acceptable to the audience's mind. Many ideas are merely subliminally suggested. For example Gulalai, a very popular and positive role model, has now stopped wearing the burqa and is wearing a head scarf instead."

Other traditions receive a

similar treatment. In one episode the need to pay an extortionate "bride-price" - the traditional Afghan gift given to the bride's family - forces a previously honest young man into crime. In another episode the villagers break with local custom and ignore the edicts of a village elder to everyone's benefit.

Drug abuse is addressed, albeit from a slightly different angle than in Eastenders. With around half of the world's opium originating in Afghanistan authorities in the West are desperate to restrict its production.

A series of storylines in the drama have spelled out the message that the cultivation of opium - a traditional crop in Afghanistan - destroys people and communities, turning farmers and their families into debtors, addicts and thieves.

Even Thatcherite free enterprise makes an appearance in the form of Rafar, a young man who returns from the refugee camps in Pakistan, full of entrepreneurial spirit. Other episodes have plugged the right to free speech, the democratic process, even Western concepts of private property.

But it has its critics. Despite the popularity of the drama among their troops, leaders of the Taliban religious army - who have imposed a barsb brand of Islamic law on the two thirds of Afghanistan they control - are uneasy.

Rahimullah Zormati, the Taliban government's deputy minister for culture, last week accused the BBC of broadcasting "social programmes... of a political nature."

Their reaction is not surprising according to one Afghan journalist who is now a refugee in Pakistan. He said that *New Home New Life* is written "by a bunch of Westernised, educated bourgeois from Kabul."

"They are exactly the sort of people, with exactly the sort of values, that the whole Taliban movement is a reaction against."

Whatever the social background of the writers, the effect of the soap is obvious.

In one mud-walled home the women argued as they prepared vegetables for lunch.

One woman, who gave her name as "Imam Jam's wife" said that the example of Gulalai had persuaded her to let her daughters work outside the house. Her daughter, cradling a 10-day-old baby, said that she had even taken off her burqa once or twice. Her mother clicked her tongue in disapproval.



In Kenya, broadcasters on radio and television can be used as a tool for education in a wide variety of topics

Gamma/Frank Spooner

Ambridge it's not, but Kenya's farmers are hooked on soap-life

BY PATRICIA NICOL

TEMBEA NA MAJIRA, or Move With the Times, a tale of everyday Kenyan folk inspired by *The Archers*, has gripped the nation and subliminally educated it in the ways of safe sex and organic farming methods.

Nine million listeners tune in twice a week to find out how the show's HIV positive widow Maria is coping with her newborn baby, and the outcome of the latest scam of the corrupt village chief and his bungling sidekick.

Tembea Na Majira, like *The Archers*, has its roots in public service broadcasting. It is accompanied, however, by a magazine programme in which issues raised in the soap are debated by experts.

The original idea for an African radio soap came from David Campbell, a British media consultant, who arrived in Kenya in 1979 to work for the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) as an agricultural communications adviser. He had previously had some contact with the team behind Radio 4's farming soap and

thought there was a huge potential for an issue-led, educational drama in Kenya which targeted a female audience.

"Eighty per cent of the work done in rural Kenya is done by women, but they are difficult to reach because they are less likely to be able to read, write or understand English - a soap opera in Swahili seemed a good way to hook them in and retain their interest," he said.

Nothing came of the idea until 1991, when Kate Lloyd Morgan, a British ODA field worker, was asked, along with two *Archers* producers, to put together a team of Kenyans to be trained to produce a radio programme.

The result was *Ndingo Nacio* (Get With It) which broadcast to the Meru region on the eastern slopes of Mount Kenya for four years before the project went national with *Tembea Na Majira*.

The colour may be local to Africa, but the themes in *Tembea Na Majira* are universal.

Familial conflicts, love, death, sex, drink, corruption and girl power all feature.

One in six Kenyans is thought to carry the HIV virus, and sixteen per cent of male listeners say the programme's treatment of HIV brought home the dangers of sexual promiscuity. In fact listeners have credited the programme with changing both their farming and their sexual practices.

Thirteen per cent of female listeners said they switched from chemical fertilisers to compost heaps under the programme's influence and the successful introduction of a new breed of sweet potato, at first regarded with suspicion by farmers because of its colour, is being attributed to the soap.

Central characters include Maria Wafulu, who is Shula Archer-like in the fortitude with which she faces up to each fresh misfortune. Infected with HIV by her husband Mogaka, who strayed just once, Maria was widowed last year. The programme "breaking" the news that her new-born child,

conceived shortly before her husband's death, was free of the virus, secured some of the soap's highest ratings.

"When we first did research into what the women wanted to learn from the soap opera, many were saying that they didn't really understand AIDS," said Mr Campbell.

"There were lots of myths spreading about the disease. It was very important that Mogaka, who eventually died of AIDS, was one of the soap's most popular characters and that we conveyed that an HIV positive mother could give birth to an uninfected child."

The programme's patriarch and matriarch are Wafulu and Nanjala, who preside over an ever-growing and increasingly difficult brood. Nanjala dabbles in witchcraft and feuds with the redoubtable Wanjiku, Wafulu's younger, feisty second wife. Wanjiku, who is determined to set up her own small business breeding chickens, is one of the shows pivotal female characters. Another one is the teenage Sarah, a rebel-

lious daughter who has an ongoing feud with her father, who fails to see why his daughter should have a secondary school education.

Within six months of first being broadcast *Tembea Na Majira* had become Kenya's second most listened to radio programme after the news.

The soap must not simply become a vehicle for tirades against male behaviour, however. "We have to be very careful that by making men the butt of the jokes we don't alienate male listeners," says Campbell. "In most households it's still the man who controls the radio."

The programme-makers also have to take care that their portrayal of corruption at a local level is not seen as an implicit critique of the Kenyan government. In the past they have turned down offers of sponsorship from groups such as Amnesty International, who have questioned the Kenyan government's human rights record. "Our aim is to educate and we can't do that if we are taken off air," Campbell said.

Bhutto arrest could spark mass protest

BY RAJA ASGHAR

THE political party of Pakistan's opposition leader, Benazir Bhutto, yesterday threatened to take to the streets in protest if the government arrests her on her planned return from abroad tomorrow.

"The whole party is going to fight... we will come on the streets," the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) secretary-general, Ahmed Mukhtar, said in Islamabad. It was responding to press reports that the government of Nawaz Sharif had decided to arrest the former prime minister.

A high court panel in Mr Sharif's home province of Punjab last week issued non-bailable warrants for Miss Bhutto's arrest for failure to appear before it in connection with a case in which she is accused of receiving kickbacks in the import of tractors from Poland.

Her lawyers say she could not appear because she had gone to Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, to meet her children. This was with the permission of the high court in her home province of Sind, the lawyers say.

The next hearing is set for Monday. Newspapers have quoted officials as saying orders had been issued to the Federal Investigation Agency to arrest Miss Bhutto on her arrival at Karachi airport.

Mr Mukhtar said she would appear before the Lahore court on Monday and her arrest would only provoke her followers to agitate.

Mr Mukhtar said the PPP central executive committee would meet in Karachi tomorrow to chart their plans if Miss Bhutto were arrested.

He expected a large number of party followers to greet their leader at Karachi airport.

A report in *The News* daily yesterday quoted an unidentified Cabinet minister as saying the government had decided to arrest Miss Bhutto because "non-compliance will amount to contempt of court."

Another paper, *The Nation*, said the decision to arrest Miss Bhutto was taken "after the Prime Minister had given the go-ahead in compliance with the court orders."

Raza Rabbani, a PPP member of the Senate (upper house) and Miss Bhutto's lawyer, said such arrest warrants had usually been issued to compel a person to appear before a court and were not necessarily intended for actual arrest.

"We are not afraid of courts; we don't want to run away from courts," he said. Mr Rabbani said Miss Bhutto would personally appear before the Lahore court on Monday and there was no need to arrest her. "If they (the government) did anything against... (Miss Bhutto), this will put a great strain on the federation (of Pakistan)."

Things are not all right on the night but they love it anyway



Simon McBurney ensures the show goes on despite bureaucracy and glitches Jane Bown

SIMON MCBURNEY, artistic director of London-based Théâtre de Complicité, arrived in New York on Monday 13 July with his stunningly intricate ensemble piece about the Polish author and Holocaust victim Bruno Schulz (1892-1942). *The Street of Crocodiles*. Last performed four years ago, it is to open here in just four days as part of this year's Lincoln Center Festival. Much hype has come before it. But can he get it ready in time?

Instantly, he is stymied by bureaucracy. The Lincoln Center has hired a theatre for *Crocodiles* at a nearby police academy, the John Jay College. But the college is charging \$1,000 (£600) an hour and McBurney discovers that any rehearsal time in the theatre before Thursday will be strictly rationed. Bad news.

Efforts by McBurney to persuade the Lincoln Center's producers to buy more time at John Jay go nowhere. He appeals for at least one over-night session, to fix lighting and paint the set. Request denied. He and cast are exiled to a tiny

rehearsal studio off Times Square. There, the air conditioning is bust. Arguments rage with the Lincoln Center. "There is a whole clash here. They say this is something they've 'bought', when in fact it is something that is still in creation. There is an immediate conflict."

MOUNTING TERROR the following day. McBurney gathers his actors, three of whom have never performed the piece before. He knows he must get four vital sequences rehearsed. By day's end he has achieved just two. "And still the Lincoln Center won't budge." There are other distractions. The whole back wall of the set, which has been built in London, does not properly fit the stage. Local journalists are trying to interview him "every second" as he struggles to work. McBurney is having trouble sleeping.

AFTER A session with the lighting crew on Wednesday,

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF SIMON MCBURNEY

McBurney begins a technical run-through on stage at the John Jay. This is vital - the production is insanely technical and complex - and it must be done today. By six o'clock they have done barely half the first scene. "I feel this absolutely unbelievable panic but I know it would be hopeless to communicate it to the actors. I think 'God, how are we going to do this?'" Before bed, McBurney is profoundly worried. The tech is not finished. And still they have to do a full dress rehearsal. The opening night is tomorrow. "I cannot let on that this really is not looking good or it will all fall apart."

THE ACTORS arrive at 9am on opening night and McBurney is "trying desperately to be calm and breezy." Tech rehearsal must be done by noon. At 4pm, it is still not finished. McBurney begins a dress rehearsal anyway. 6pm comes.

7pm comes. At 7.30, the front of house is getting upset - the doors must be opened. McBurney rushes to help with make-up. Still feigning calm. No one knows that worse is still to come. It is past eight. Everyone is seated and - calamity - the few lights dimly illuminating the stage inexplicably go dark.

It is not meant to happen. McBurney begs the lighting box for explanation. The computer has crashed. Everything wiped. What to do?

McBurney informs the front of house - there is instant paralysis. McBurney mounts the stage. "Ladies and gentlemen. I regret to announce..." "What? We can't bear you." McBurney: "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE COMPUTER HAS CRASHED. THERE ARE NO LIGHTS. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TAKE FIVE..."

Miraculously, the computer glitch is solved. The play begins

at last. Still things are going wrong. A tap that is meant to gush water doesn't. Lighting is all to pot. Worse, the pace is incredibly slow and the audience is not laughing where it should. "I start to sweat terribly. I start cursing and my producer next to me is gripping my arm." More disasters. Bright lights inexplicably bathe a final scene that depends on the stage being almost entirely dark. A gunshot goes off - but several seconds too late. Oh misery.

At last, it is over. Lights up, cast on stage and... What's this? They loved it. The audience loved it. The applause is crazy. A standing ovation. "You see, you see," bellows his producer in his ear.

STILL NO joy with the Lincoln Center over access to John Jay. But the worst is over. On Friday there are fewer hitches in the show. Pace is better too. Lou Reed is in the audience! But on Friday night, sleeping is hopeless. Tomorrow the review will be in the

New York Times. It has to be good if seats for next week are to be filled. McBurney gets up at four and tramps streets bunting for the *Times* - can't find one. 6am and it slides under door. Read it. It is... brilliant. (See excerpts below.) Hah! How the Lincoln Center loves him now on this morning. "The atmosphere went from darkness to light." The power of the *Times*! The rest of run (until 26 July) sells out. Other stops on the tour: Toronto, Minneapolis and Tokyo.

EXCERPTS FROM the review: "This astounding production from the Théâtre de Complicité..."

"The troupe's brilliant ensemble... the stage with the sort of distorted, improbable images that you see in real life only through peripheral vision. The work's final, lyrical image... is devastating and unspeakably beautiful."

Ben Brantley, theatre critic, *New York Times*, 18 July 1998.

DAVID USBORNE

Saturday 25 July 1998

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BUSINESS

Nationwide to raise rates

Move comes a day after vote to stay mutual

By Andrew Verity

NATIONWIDE revealed plans to raise its interest rates yesterday, less than 24 hours after members voted by a tiny majority to keep the building society mutual.

The society said it will raise interest rates for mortgage borrowers by up to 0.6 percentage points on 1 September - whether or not the Bank of England raises base rates next month.

The rise is certain to annoy borrowing members, who on Thursday voted for the building society to stay mutual on the basis of better rates. The cost of a typical £50,000 mortgage with Nationwide will increase by up to £300 a year.

The society plans to use the interest hike to increase its

appeal to savers, who outnumber borrowers by seven to one, by raising savings rates alongside. The rise for savers will probably be greater than the increase for borrowers.

Brian Davis, chief executive of Nationwide, said the society was responding to criticism of its savings rates at its annual meeting on Thursday. Mortgage rates were far lower than those of most other lenders.

Mr Davis said: "At the moment we are ludicrously competitive on mortgage rates, but most of the criticism of us came from savers."

"We certainly don't need a margin of 0.85 (between Nationwide and converted

societies). It is too large a margin."

"You don't have to win the World Cup 3-0; you can actually win it just on penalties."

Nationwide has resisted raising its rates for nearly a year despite three base rate rises - in August and November last year and then in June this year.

This has left its mortgage rate at 8.1 per cent, compared with 8.45 per cent at its fellow mutual Bradford & Bingley and 8.95 per cent at Abbey National and Halifax. The size of the difference has given strong support to the society's campaign to stay mutual.

Mr Davis added: "We are

three rises behind everyone else because we have been trying to hold other people back (from raising rates). It didn't seem appropriate (to raise rates) in the middle of an election."

Nationwide will keep its mortgage rate below that of the converted societies - probably by at least a quarter of a point.

However, the rise is certain to sow disappointment among borrowers. Throughout the campaign to stay mutual, mortgage holders have been enticed to vote for mutuality by lower interest rates.

Typically a homeowner with a £50,000 loan was told to expect a saving of £25 a month in

comparison with a converted society - but only as long as rates were sustained.

City analysts have long believed Nationwide could not sustain such a low rate. The society only committed itself to holding at 8.1 per cent until August 1. But it has carefully avoided warning rates would rise after the vote.

Mr Davis yesterday resisted suggestions that the board had kept rates down to swing the vote in its favour.

"If we were trying to manipulate the vote we would have done the opposite. We would have kept mortgages a fraction lower and pushed the savings rates much higher."

He also hinted that Nationwide would use its 1 per cent efficiency advantage, stemming from the absence of dividends to shareholders, to offer better savings rates.

Mr Davis dismissed persistent suggestions that the narrowness of the vote on mutuality would encourage a hostile bid.

"The problem you've got if you are a predator is you won't have to persuade 50 per cent; you will have to persuade 75 per cent. All offers would have to come through the board and we would probably give them quite a hard time."

He added: "Labour got 44 per cent of the vote and they called it a landslide; we got 51 (and people say) 'Well that was a bit close wasn't it?' What exactly is the logic in that?"

BRIEFING

VAT to be lifted on gold bullion

GOLD BARS, wafers and coins sold mainly for their bullion content will no longer be subject to VAT once a directive from Brussels lifting VAT from "investment" gold is implemented, probably in 1999. VAT was imposed after the discovery of widespread fraud involving reclaiming VAT from melted coins which had not paid it in the first place and in effect killed the retail trade in coins. Prices are currently at a 20-year low. Kruggerands sell for around £180 and sovereigns for £44 plus VAT.

Car Group in talks over rescue

THE CAR GROUP CAR GROUP, the struggling second-hand car dealer which issued a profits warning last week, delivered further bad news yesterday when it revealed it is in talks over a refinancing. The company's shares skidded a further 26 per cent lower to 26p on the announcement. They stood at £21.5p in October.

Car Group, which operates car supermarkets, is seeking an equity injection and is in talks with "a major financial institution." A review of its operations has identified a need to reduce its break-even point. It hopes the restructuring will improve margins, which are running below forecast levels.

FSA moves on bogus bank

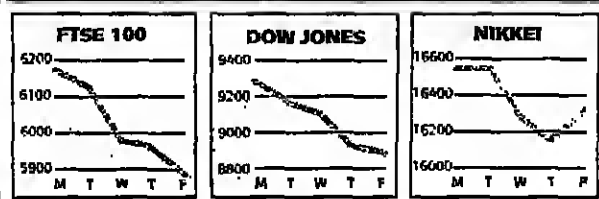
THE FINANCIAL Services Authority yesterday gained a High Court injunction against a fictitious bank run from offices in west London which is believed to have taken £17m (£10.2m) in unauthorised deposits.

The injunction was granted against Hanover Bank Ltd and two individuals, Winston Allen and Patrick Makosso-Jouvain, who promoted Hanover Bank from offices at 22a St Ives Street, London SW7 and Suite 234, 28 Old Brompton Road, London SW3.

It restrains the defendants from accepting deposits in contravention of the Banking Act, which insists banks must be authorised by the FSA unless they are exempt.

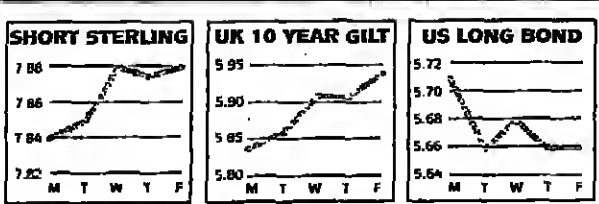
The injunction also stops the defendants making fraudulent inducements to make a deposit and from describing the company, incorporated in Antigua, as a bank. The FSA issued an urgent appeal for people with any information on Hanover Bank to contact its investigations department on 0171-601 5541 or 0171-601 4522.

STOCK MARKETS



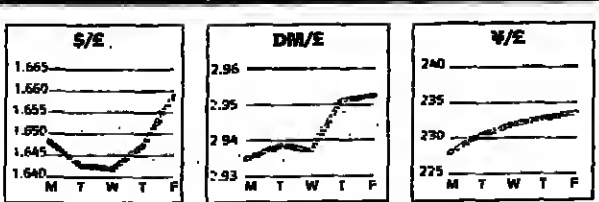
Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk High	52 wk Low	Vol
FTSE 100	5892.30	-83.90	-1.40	6183.70	4392.50	3.39
FTSE 250	5520.60	-52.20	-0.94	5970.90	4428.30	3.06
FTSE 350	2837.10	-37.90	-1.32	2959.10	2141.80	3.32
FTSE All Share	2760.92	-36.68	-1.31	2886.52	2106.59	3.31
FTSE SmallCap	2520.00	-30.00	-1.18	2793.80	2182.10	3.17
FTSE Fledgling	1390.00	-12.50	-0.89	1517.10	1225.20	3.42
FTSE AIM	1089.50	-5.00	-0.46	1146.90	965.90	1.19
FTSE EBLCC 100	1093.06	-5.84	-0.53			
Dow Jones	8886.54	-42.74	-0.48	9367.84	8971.32	1.65
Nikkei	14881.89	-173.80	-1.17	15069.67	14488.21	0.93
Hong Kong	8257.46	-81.21	-0.98	16820.31	7351.68	4.86
Dax	6035.28	-23.17	-0.38	6217.83	5487.24	2.64

INTEREST RATES



Index	3 month	Yr chg	1 Year	Yr chg	10 year	Yr chg	Long bond	Yr chg
UK	7.81	0.75	7.94	0.44	5.93	-1.03	5.54	-1.30
US	5.69	-0.03	5.81	-0.16	5.43	-0.72	5.66	-0.79
Japan	0.67	0.03	0.68	-0.10	1.68	-0.81	2.23	-0.74
Germany	3.53	0.37	3.80	0.34	4.67	-0.89	5.28	-0.93

CURRENCIES



POUND			DOLLAR				
	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago		at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6592	+1.17c	1.6736	Sterling	0.6027	-0.43p	0.5973
D-Mark	2.9529	-0.17p	3.0613	D-Mark	1.7784	-1.38p	1.8299
Yen	233.94	+90.57	194.25	Yen	140.90	-0.67	116.08
E index	105.10	+0.00	106.30	S index	113.30	0.00	104.70

OTHER INDICATORS

OTHER INDICATORS								
	Close	Chg	Yr Ago		Index	Chg	Yr Ago	Next Sps
Brent Oil (\$)	12.15	0.02	18.76	GDP	115.40	2.60	112.48	Aug
Gold (\$)	292.35	-0.80	323.38	RPI	163.40	3.70	157.57	Jul
Silver (\$)	5.67	0.00	4.28	Base Rates		7.50	6.75	at 5pm

www.bloomberg.com/uk SOURCE BLOOMBERG

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.5698	Mexican (nuevo peso)	13.23
Austria (schillings)	20.09	Netherlands (guilder)	3.2214
Belgium (franc)	59.07	New Zealand (\$)	3.0378
Canada (\$)	2.4057	Norway (krone)	12.17
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8367	Portugal (escudo)	290.03
Denmark (krone)	10.95	Saudi Arabia (rials)	6.0116
Finland (markka)	8.7447	Singapore (\$)	2.6952
France (franc)	9.5889	Spain (pesetas)	242.23
Germany (mark)	2.8706	South Africa (rand)	9.9485
Greece (drachma)	472.88	Sweden (krone)	12.80
Hong Kong (\$)	12.40	Switzerland (franc)	2.4213
Ireland (punt)	1.1355	Thailand (baht)	61.01
India (rupee)	64.47	Turkey (lira)	429176
Israel (shekel)	5.5591	USA (\$)	1.6116
Italy (lira)	2834		
Japan (yen)	228.72		
Malaysia (ringgit)	6.5308		
Malta (lira)	0.6228		

Rates for indication purposes only

Source: Thomas Cook

Wessex deal could herald more water takeovers

BRITAIN'S PRIVATISED water utility sector was haced for a wave of corporate action yesterday after Wessex Water agreed a surprise £1.4bn takeover by Enron Corporation, an American energy group based in Houston, Texas.

The deal is the first move into the UK water market by an American player, and comes three years after the US invasion of the UK electricity market. As Wessex shares jumped 24 per cent to 611.5p, compared to the 630p-per-share cash offer price, other water stocks surged higher as the City bet on more takeover activity.

Enron, which has been involved in the gas and electricity generation in the UK since 1989, said it was acquiring Wessex as the springboard to building a leading company in the world's fragmented \$300bn market for water and waste management services. It will be taking on top European companies such as Générale des Eaux of France.

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor

"Currently there are only a handful of large private-sector companies operating in this market, and there are tremendous opportunities for future growth as the industry moves toward privatisation and consolidation," said Kenneth L. Lay, Enron's chairman and chief executive.

Enron has not ruled out other UK deals, though it said it will concentrate first on the integration of Wessex, which operates in areas such as Avon, Dorset and Somerset. Enron is also interested in opportunities in Europe, South America and North America.

The Houston group said it had not held talks with any other UK water companies, and had chosen Wessex because of its position in the industry's performance tables and the strength of its management. Wessex's chairman Nicholas Hood and chief executive Colin



(Left to right) Nicholas Hood, chairman of Wessex Water, Rebecca Mark, chairman of Enron International, and Kenneth Lay, chairman of Enron Corporation, after yesterday's announcement

Skellett will stay on in his existing roles, with the extra brief of developing the international side of the business. "We didn't hold any other talks. We looked at the sector and decided Wessex was the right one for us," said Ralph Hodge, chairman of Enron Europe.

Wessex sought to acquire South West Water two years ago but the move was blocked by the competition authorities. It has been keen on breaking into

the international market, but lacked the firepower. Mr Hood's 127,000 shares mean he will net £800,000 from the deal, while Mr Skellett will net £400,000.

Enron and City analysts said they did not expect the deal to run into problems with the regulatory authorities, but Otwat, the water watchdog, may be concerned about the loss of another stock market listing in the sector as it will reduce the pool of companies

it uses to compare on criteria such as dividend payments. Yet Mr Hodge was confident the deal would not be referred. "We have been working with the gas and electricity regulators here," he said. "We feel very comfortable with the UK regulatory regime, which is clear and transparent."

City analysts seemed happy with the 630p-per-share exit price, which represents a 28 premium to the 493p close on Thursday and a multiple of 12.3 times Wessex's earnings last year. "It's a pretty full price," said Richard Franklin of BT Alex Brown. Enron said the deal "should create jobs rather than result in redundancies". Enron is valued at \$16.6bn, and recorded profits of \$105m before exceptional last year on turnover of \$20bn. Its principal activities are in oil and gas as well as wholesale and retail energy operations in the US.

BT joins Malaysia's mobile phone boom

BT BOOSTED its presence in Asia yesterday when it paid \$250m for a 33 per cent stake in the Malaysian telecoms company Binariang.

The move gives BT a major stake in the country's fast-growing mobile phone industry, in which Binariang has a 22 per cent stake. It will also enable Concert, BT's global corporate telecoms business, to win new deals in the country.

Sir Peter Bonfield, BT's chief executive, said: "In order to achieve our aim of becoming the world's leading communications player, we have established partnerships and alliances in our key target markets with companies which have a strong local base and which share our vision of the future."

BY NIGEL COPE

He said BT remained on the lookout for further international opportunities.

A dive in the Asian stock markets has helped drive down asset values, and analysts welcomed a deal which they said had been sealed at a reasonable price. BT shares closed 3.5p higher at 825p.

BT, which will take a seat on Binariang's board, said Malaysian mobile penetration was only nine to 11 per cent, with vast growth prospects. Tun Haniff Omar, chairman of Binariang, said: "We have successfully grown the Maxis mobile business to the current 450,000 subscriber base."

The deal is part of a larger

plan by Binariang to raise about \$500m through links with overseas groups and debt securities. Through Concert, the Malaysian group will have access to BT's global business services. "The involvement of BT will provide our company with broader technical and financial resources, so that we may complete the expansion of our GSM cellular and terrestrial networks to achieve our objective of becoming the preferred supplier of communications service to all Malaysians," Mr Omar said.

Apart from BT, Binariang had been recently linked to companies including Singapore Telecommunications, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, and Cable and Wireless.

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

EQUITIES STAGED another ragged retreat. Footsie tumbled 83.9 points to 5,892.3 and the supporting indices were weak. The market has been hit by the rush of profits warnings, particularly the alert from ICI. It fears more trading gloom as sterling remains strong and the Asian crisis continues.

GKN led the retreat with a 65p fall to 770p. ICI fell a further 43p to 787p. British Aerospace, on talk of a link with Daimler-Benz Aerospace, bucked the trend with a 27p gain to 513p.

NEW YORK

US STOCKS WERE lower at midday as the nervous mood reappeared on Wall Street, wiping out early gains. Investors, skittish after four straight sessions of losses, got no relief from Presidential Securities, where strategist Greg Smith said investors need take some of their money out of stocks and put it into the safer bond market.

At 6.09pm EST the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which has lost more than 400 points in four sessions, stood at 8888.95, down 44.03.

TOKYO

JAPAN'S MARKETS shrugged off the election of Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi as the Liberal Democratic Party's new president, a position that virtually guarantees he will become the next prime minister.

"Of the three candidates, it's the most disappointing outcome, but it doesn't make all that much difference," said Giles Obden, equity strategist at Jardine Fleming. Japanese stocks posted an impressive late afternoon rally just ahead of the vote, finishing the day up 173.88 points or 1.07 per cent at 16,361.89.

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Americans make a bigger splash

COME ON IN, the water's lovely. Having been barred from building any more power stations over here, the US corporation Enron has decided to try its hand at running a water company instead. The blurb accompanying yesterday's agreed £1.4bn bid for Wessex Water was full of the usual clichés and management-speak. Wessex will become the centre of excellence for Enron's new international water business, helping it develop supplies in exotic places as far afield as Latin America and Asia. Has no-one told the Americans that when British water companies try to export their skills abroad it invariably ends in disaster?

For Wessex, the deal shows how limited its ambitions became after it was blocked from taking over South West Water. The management will stay on, but under the thumb of the feisty-sounding Texan lady Rebecca P. Mark. As for customers, Enron says they will benefit from Wessex being part of a stronger international group - while studiously avoiding any reference to prices.

There are not the same kind of savings to be had here from two water companies merging, or even a United Utilities-style mix of water and electricity. But Enron is



MICHAEL HARRISON

not exactly flavour of the month, having opposed the Government's coal review at every turn. And any deal involving utility fat cats that does not deliver tangible benefits for the consumer looks dead in the water.

The least the regulator, Ian Byatt, will surely want is his pound of flesh for the loss of a stock market comparator that will result - always supposing the Americans manage to avoid the Mergers Commission. The market took yesterday's deal as the cue for a feeding frenzy in the water sector. But those

hoping for the floodgates to open may find themselves waiting in vain.

A tale of two Germans

ON TUESDAY this week, Siemens plc, the UK arm of the German electronics group, hosted a dinner in London for a small gathering of correspondents. Alan Wood, the company's chief executive, was in upbeat mood despite the profits warning issued the previous week by the parent company.

In fact, Siemens' UK businesses are doing rather well compared with the rest of the group. Return on capital averages 20 per cent against a group target of 8.5 per cent, and the UK boasts the leanest corporate structure of any of Siemens' European operations. Siemens' silicon chip plant on Tyneside is as efficient and competitive as anything the company has in Taiwan or the former East Germany. Although the collapse in chip prices has forced it to scrap the second phase of the Tyneside development, Siemens is getting almost as much production from phase one as the entire project had been

budgeted to make. Mr Wood's masters in Munich seem reasonably satisfied. Indeed Siemens plc with its Anglo-Saxon approach to management and financing, looks like becoming the role model for how things will increasingly be done back home.

What a contrast its Munich neighbour BMW provided two days later. BMW announced that its Rover car subsidiary is axing 1,500 workers, moving onto a four-day week and shifting £1bn worth of component orders from UK to overseas suppliers. BMW insists the cutbacks have been forced on it by the strength of the pound; yet Siemens says it has no plans to retrench in the UK. All of which lends weight to the suspicion that BMW is using the exchange rate as a smokescreen to push through productivity improvements and shake up its supply base.

Rover says the 200/400 line at Longbridge is equal to the best in Europe and not far off Japanese levels of efficiency. The latest Treasury research paints a different picture, suggesting that productivity levels among UK car producers are still only half those in Japan.

For years British exporters have covered over this productivity gap with the help of low wages and a weak exchange

rate. Now the gap has been exposed, they should be using the strength of sterling as a stimulus to improve productivity, not as an excuse to whinge. In this respect Siemens could teach BMW a lesson or two.

Black and white striped blunder

FREDDY'S BACK, and the nightmare at St James's Park continues. The return of Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall to the board of Newcastle United Football Club is as depressing as it was predictable. Apparently, the board of the club has checked out its reserve powers only to discover there isn't much it can do when the two men who control 65 per cent of the shares decide they want their ball back.

So the striking partnership of Shepherd and Hall return during the close season as chairman and deputy chairman of the football club, hoping the fans have forgiven if not forgotten their behaviour during that unfortunate away fixture in Spain.

The plc chairman Denis Cassidy is on a free transfer from Liberty, another family-controlled company which likes to

change its board like football teams change their strip. Like all managers, however, he believes in a new season and a new start.

But the omens do not look good. Even when he has signed another non-executive to the board, the independent directors will still be outnumbered by executive directors and nominees of the two controlling shareholders. The attempt to integrate the boards of the plc and the football club, meanwhile, look like a half-hearted attempt at best to cramp the style of Freddy and Douglas.

The deadly duo have written to ticket holders this week apologising once more for the events of last March and setting out their plans for the future. Unfortunately these contain no hint of when they will reduce their shareholdings to below 50 per cent or, failing that, when they will take the club private again.

With shares languishing at 74p, compared with a flotation price a year ago of 135p, neither exit route is possible at the moment. To add to their woes, supporters have the prospect to look forward to of France's only World Cup flop, Stéphane Guivarch, turning out in three weeks' time. All in all, the new season looks like being as depressing on the field as off it.

Services suffer but GDP keeps up pace

ECONOMIC GROWTH held steady in the second quarter of this year, according to figures released yesterday, but there are signs of a slowdown in the services sector.

GDP grew by 0.5 per cent in the second quarter, the same as in the first quarter of the year, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said. Preliminary figures showed that the annual growth rate of GDP fell from 3 per cent to 2.6 per cent, in line with market expectations. Services growth slowed to 0.6 per cent in the second quarter from 0.7 per cent in the first, and the ONS estimated that manufacturing output had stabilised. Manufacturing growth was negative in the last quarter of the 1997 and the first quarter of

BY LEA PATERSON

1998, so the sector is technically in recession. The news ONS data did not provide a precise estimate of manufacturing growth in the second quarter.

Analysts were divided on the impact of the figures on the UK interest-rate outlook, with some predicting that rates would have to rise to curb inflationary pressures, and others saying the Bank of England had done enough to bring inflation down. Most experts agree there is little chance of a cut in rates when the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meets in a fortnight's time.

Adam Cole, from HSBC Securities, said: "On balance we

still expect the August MPC meeting to leave rates on hold, but there is a clear risk of a further increase, particularly given the proximity of the August Inflation Report."

Sterling was little changed following publication of the data, but rose later in the day to close at DM2.95, up more than half a penny from yesterday's close.

Economists at ABN Amro commented: "A bounce in oil and utilities production and a continued modest easing in services output are the key features. MPC 'doves' will be encouraged by weaker services growth but the next MPC meeting will be finely balanced."

Excluding oil and gas, GDP growth slowed slightly, down

from 0.6 per cent in the first quarter to 0.4 per cent in the second. Within the services sector, distribution, hotels and catering grew by just 0.1 per cent, reflecting the slowdown in retail sales, according to Mr Cole from HSBC.

Although the ONS is yet to release estimates of second-quarter manufacturing growth, Francis Maude, the shadow Chancellor, said the figures "confirmed that manufacturing risks slipping further into recession. It is more likely than ever before that manufacturing will show a third consecutive quarter of declining output."

But the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said: "We still have a fundamentally strong economic position."

IN BRIEF

Eurotunnel plans Calais shops

EUROTUNNEL yesterday announced plans to develop 27,500 square metres of land next to the Calais terminal, attracted by the transport facilities and the sharp price differences between the UK and France.

Permission is being sought for 15,000 square metres of factory shops, to be operated by a third party, and a 12,500 square foot store for Castorama, a well-known French chain selling DIY goods and gardening equipment.

Eurotunnel also revealed that total cross-Channel traffic was up 15 per cent a year in the second quarter, while the freight market was up 32 per cent. Rail freight business was only 3 per cent higher because of the French train drivers' strike in April this year but Eurostar passenger traffic was up 12 per cent a year to 1.69 million.

Adidas let-down

ADIDAS yesterday became the latest sportswear firm to report disappointing profits. Shares in Adidas-Salomon plunged in Frankfurt after sales of its golf equipment suffered in the US and Japan. Adidas merged with the French sports equipment firm Salomon in February, hoping to tap into booming sales in golf clubs. But the Salomon division suffered from disappointing performances.

Lasmo pulls out

LASMO has agreed to sell its remaining Colombian business to a unit of Petroleo Brasileiro of Brazil for \$151m, becoming the latest oil company to pull out of Colombia as security concerns increase. The UK's second-largest oil exploration company said it made a profit of £50m from the sale of Lasmo Oil (Colombia) to Braspetro Oil Services.

Thistle sale

THE PROPOSED sale of the UK hotel chain Thistle is now expected next month after the major shareholder, New Zealand-based Briarley Investments, confirmed its 46 per cent stake will be sold. But it is still not clear whether the company will be sold as a unit or broken up between a variety of trade buyers. Briarley's chairman, Roger Douglas, said yesterday that the group would liquidate under-performing parts of its portfolio and concentrate on investments in Australasia. Thistle shares gained 1p to 225.5p.

Utilities escape the deep despair

THERE IS nothing like a surprise takeover bid to offer a little inspiration. As the stock market continued to wallow in gloom, with Footsie off 83.9 points to 3,892.3, utilities romped ahead following the £1.4bn bid for Wessex Water.

Wessex splashed 118.5p higher to 611.5p against the 630p agreed offer by the US Enron Corporation.

The Americans have been avid buyers of electricity companies but Wessex represents the first US assault on a water business.

Hopes of more bids had other waters producing something approaching a maelstrom of excitement. Yorkshire Water rose 46.5p to 548.5p; South West Water 81p to 1,128.5p and Anglian 51p to 920p.

The bigger companies were also in demand. Thames put on 19p to 1,135p and Severn Trent 25p to 1,054p. Others in the swim included mixed water and electricity groups like United Utilities, up 4p to 822p, and ScottishPower, 16p to 600p. Hyder gained 45.5p to 1,040p.

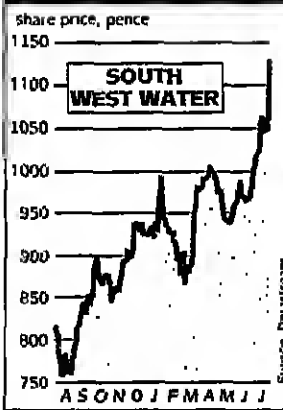
Among pure electricity groups to be charged by the Enron initiative were Scottish Hydro Electricity, up 20.5p at

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



There has been a steady flow of profit warnings in the past year. But the Imperial Chemical Industries alert on Thursday, together with the caution, even despair, expressed by others, has smashed confidence.

After hitting a high on Monday Footsie has fallen nearly 300 points. The supporting indices, too, have been weak. Yesterday the mid cap fell 52.3 to 5,520.6 and the small cap 30 to 2,520.

With the market braced for more profit warnings. Bowthorpe, the electronics group, fared 24.4p to 465.5p on rumours of a cautious statement.

The best performing blue chip was British Aerospace, up 27p to 513p. Reports of defence merger talks with Daimler-Benz Aerospace prompted the excitement, heightening speculation the oft-mooted BAE merger with General Electric Co could be back on the agenda. An array of analytical support for BAE also helped it ignore the market retreat. So did the increasing possibility that Airbus Industrie, where BAE has a 20 per cent interest, could be incorporated and floated.

GKN led the retreat of the engineers, down 7.8 per cent to 770p. Not far behind was Siebe, off 73p to 1,032p (although late trades suggested a price nearer to 1,090p); Rolls-Royce 13p to 240p and Smiths Industries, 35p to 240p.

ICI remained in the doldrums, falling a further 43p to 737p, lowest for more than a year. Pilkington's downbeat trading statement produced further cracks, sending the shares 4p lower to 100p, worst for six years.

Car Group reversed a further 5p to 26p following its latest gloomy comments; Capital Corporation, the casino group, fell 5p to 62.5p following Thursday's profits warning.

Carlisle slipped 1p to 13.5p as 1998's tycoon Michael Ashcroft prepared to move in as controlling shareholder and chairman. The property group is to be developed as a services company, embracing recruitment operations and the security business Capital, up 14.5p to 189.5p. Mr Ashcroft made a profit of around £150m when ADT, a British company he moved to Bermuda, was taken over by US conglomerate Tyco. He is pumping around £35m into the new look Carlisle.

There was more excitement on the oil pitch. Swedish group Sodra Petroleum said Shell may have found oil off the Falkland Islands which, despite Shell denials, sent Desire Petroleum 27.5p higher to 232.5p. The Sodra off-shoot traded on AIM put 00 3p to 65.5p.

WATCH SPECTRUM

Technologies, due to make its debut on the fringe Offex share market on Monday. Placed at 46p the shares are expected to top 65p. The company features the mighty British Aerospace as a 20 per cent shareholder. It designs and makes state-of-the-art industrial laser systems for the production of electrical wiring networks used in the aerospace industry. Spectrum is now looking to extend its activities into other industries such as electronics and transport.

Lasmo, off 3p to 220p, is pulling out of Colombia, selling its operations to a Brazilian group for £144m. The withdrawal had no impact on little Emerald Energy, with hopes of Colombian success, unchanged at 65p.

Atlantic Caspian Resources held at 14.75p. It is thought to be near a significant deal in Kazakhstan. Such a deal would transform ACR.

SEAQ VOLUME: 722.3m
SEAQ TRADES: 57,022
GILTS INDEX: n/a



Stewart Newton is in line to scoop £44m through Mellon Bank's investment in his company

Neville Elder

BY LEA PATERSON

STAFF AT Newtow Investment Management, a privately owned UK fund manager, will share £72m after Mellon Bank said it planned to take a majority stake in the company. The lion's share - £44m - will fall to Stewart Newton, who founded Newton Investment Management in 1977. He is to continue as chairman.

Mellon, a broadly based US financial services company, is to acquire 75 per cent of

US bank brings Newton windfall

Newton in a deal which values the UK fund manager at around £170m. Mellon will pay Royal Bank of Scotland £56m for its 33 per cent stake in the company, and will acquire a further 42 per cent through the purchase of shares owned by Newton staff and management.

The remaining 25 per cent of the company will still be held by Newton staff and management.

After the deal is completed, Mr Newton will see his 33 per cent stake in the company diluted to 7.5 per cent. In total, 300 Newton staff will directly benefit from the deal.

Mellon said that Newton would form the "cornerstone" of its investment management business, and that it had no intention of altering either the investment strategy or the culture of the fund manager.

Mr Newton said: "Increased distribution and enhanced global reach will allow investment to grow in all aspects of the business. Clients and staff will have the added security of an enlarged capital base." Newton currently has £12.5bn of funds under management.

French seek bigger alliance

THE FRENCH government yesterday stepped up its efforts to create a national aerospace group by urging Dassault to join the newly formed Aérospatiale-Lagardere alliance.

Alain Richard, the French defence minister, said Dassault Aviation should take part in the defence industry consolidation sparked by this week's surprise decision to privatise Aérospatiale and merge it with Lagardere's Matra hi-tech division. His comments came as shares in British Aerospace

BY FRANCESCO GUERRERA

(BAe), the UK defence group, soared 5.56 per cent to 515p following reports that it had discussed a merger with its German counterpart Daimler-Benz Aerospace (DASA). A tie-up between BAe and DASA would be a major step in the long-awaited consolidation of Europe's fragmented defence industry. BAe yesterday declined to comment on the reports, saying only that it had been talking to DASA about "a

whole series of issues" for quite some time.

Mr Richard told the French newspaper *La Tribune*: "Our plan is to simplify and revitalise our industrial capacity in space and aeronautics. Dassault must be associated with the Aérospatiale-Lagardere grouping."

The minister's intervention is the latest attempt by the authorities to break the resistance of the Dassault family - owner of a 49.9 per cent stake in Dassault Aviation - to a merger with Aérospatiale

which owns a 46 per cent stake in the group.

The French government is keen to create a national aerospace group before embarking on pan-European alliances aimed at competing with the American giants Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon.

Under the terms of the deal announced earlier this week, the government would cut its holding in Aérospatiale to below 50 per cent, while Lagardere would take up a 30-33 per cent stake.

ICI sells pigments division

IMPERIAL CHEMICAL Industries was back on the disposal trail yesterday, as its shares continued to plunge on the back of Thursday's shock profit warning.

The chemical giant sold its US titanium dioxide business to Houston-based NL Industries for \$250m (£156m). The division, which produces pigments used to whiten paint and coatings, had sales of \$250m and operating profit of \$7m last year. NL, one of the leading producers of titanium dioxide, was ICI's joint

venture partner in the division's main plant in Louisiana, and was widely expected to acquire the business.

NL also agreed to acquire a former ICI plant in Grimsby which was bought from Du Pont last year when the American giant took over ICI's own US titanium dioxide operations for \$750m.

The sale did little to lift ICI's share price, which was hit by a wave of selling with the market

still reeling from Thursday's profit warning. The shares closed 43p lower at 737p, wiping more than £250m from the company's stock market value.

The disposal of the titanium dioxide division, which will need regulatory clearance, is part of ICI's plan to transform itself into a producer of high-margin specialty chemicals by offloading its commodity chemicals operations. Since announcing a radical overhaul last year, the chemical group has disposed of £40n worth of

businesses and acquired the specialty chemical assets of the Dutch group Unilever for \$80n.

City analysts greeted the deal with scepticism, noting that the sum received by ICI was low given that the price of titanium dioxide rose by a third in the past year. One said: "ICI's stretched balance sheet makes it look more and more like a forced seller of assets. There is little doubt ICI will struggle to dispose of assets at the prices it was getting a year ago."

SPORT

Crazy mixed-up feelings in the mixed zone

ONE OF my colleagues, who shall remain nameless... obviously he has a name, but I won't use it... anyway, this colleague came up with possibly the purest response I know of to the frustrations of what we toilers after truth call "the mixed zone". What, you may ask, is a mixed zone when it's at home? Well the first thing to say is that a mixed zone is never at home. It is always somewhere else, usually in a large sports stadium, through an unmarked door and down a long twisting flight of stairs full of people bustling back up them, people who have already found the mixed zone and used it for its proper purpose.

What, you may ask, with increasing impatience, is the proper purpose of the mixed zone? The official response would be that a mixed zone is a neutral area where

sporting protagonists congregate after their competition so that members of the sporting press may canvass their opinions.

But I have pondered over this question for some years now, and the conclusion I have formed is this: a mixed zone is a device to bring frustration into the life of the sportswriter.

"How so?" I hear you ask. Or was that "bloody get on with it"? Well, let me tell you how it was in the Stadio Olimpico the other week. As the 400 metres runners in the Rome grand prix meeting crossed the line, with Michael Johnson first and three Britons in his wake, I left my position high up in the stand and made my way to the press desk, where I asked the way to the mixed zone.

I was led by a helpful attendant along a corridor, around a corner and into a room full of empty chairs

with an empty table on a podium at one end of it, at which point my guide became uncertain and disappeared through a side door like the white rabbit.

Doubling back, I made my way along the outside of the stadium until I found a likely doorway which I was prevented from entering by a young man with a blazer and a badge. He indicated another doorway further along, which I entered, and discovered led to a corridor containing three more doors. All of them locked.

Doubling back, I returned to the press desk and, happily, encountered the press chief, who pointed me towards an unmarked door - of course! - through which there was the inevitable twisting flight of stairs and - yes - people racing upwards.

It was like walking in at the end of a party. Johnson, America's world



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

and Olympic champion, was leaving his kit gathered in his hands. This was not a mixed zone; it was a twilight zone.

But even being in the right place at the right time, or well before it, is no guarantee of avoiding that

teeth-grinding sensation. After a big race at an event like the Olympics, the barriers which separate the arriving athletes from the flood tide of reporters seethe with activity - and sometimes, anger.

The also-rans are always the first to arrive - no television or radio reporters have bothered to detain them further up the line. And as they slump down on the changing benches, mentally reviewing the failure they have just experienced, starting the infinitely laborious business of removing their spikes and getting into their tracksuits, perhaps letting out the odd stifled cry, there is an awkward silence.

We are crowded in front of them, but we do not want to talk to them. Sometimes, out of sheer embarrassment, you engage someone in conversation. But this entails the

risk that when the star performer arrives, you will be embroiled in a discussion you don't need. It's not nice, but there it is.

When the object of everyone's desire arrives, there is a shameless scramble. Those lucky few who find themselves wedged against the rail where the athlete is standing are in immediate danger of losing their ears as hands bearing tape recorders thrust forward either side of their heads.

Unless you are in the front two or three ranks of straining bodies you cannot hear anything. Of course, there will be a press conference later on, conducted haltingly with questions in English and German, or English and French, or English and Russian. Later on, when your deadline has passed, there is no alternative but to be

here, in an old-fashioned football crowd where, if no one is pissing down the back of your leg, they are using your shoulder as a writing table or digging their elbow into your side.

It is hardly surprising that in such circumstances, tempers fray. What pushed my colleague beyond the brink at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics was the overbearing presence of a large American television cameraman bearing a large overbearing camera in the way that television cameramen do.

After two verbal warnings, my friend - a small Welshman, in his 60s, with a fine knowledge of all aspects of boxing - gave expression to his feelings in the form of a right hook.

Not nice, but there it is. In retrospect, a welcome blow for the freedom of the press.

Trent Bridge memories: In 1965 Peter and Graeme Pollock were the key to a famous South African Test victory

Pollocks' part in the birth of golden era

BY ADAM SZRETER

WHEN SHAUN POLLOCK took the field at Trent Bridge for the fourth Test against England that began on Thursday it was in the knowledge that on the same ground 33 years ago, his father Peter and uncle Graeme shared one of their finest hours together in the all-too-brief period that they graced cricket's world stage on South Africa's behalf.

The occasion was the second Test of a three-match series, and the sides arrived in Nottingham after a thrilling game at Lord's had ended all-square. During that match a ball from Peter Pollock, the older brother by three years and regarded as the best fast bowler outside the Caribbean, had hit John Edrich on the head. "It was always going to be a good contest and England looked the likely winners," Pollock said, "but it turned around after that and by the end England were having to put the shutters up."

Under MJK Smith's captaincy, England were on a run of 14 Tests unbeaten, including a 1-0 series win in South Africa the previous winter, but they were now having to make do without Ted Dexter who had broken his leg in a car accident earlier in the summer. The

South Africans, under Peter van der Merwe, were also one or two players short. "Tony Pithey and Trevor Goddard weren't available. We didn't have a genuine opening bat to go in with Eddie Barlow and I didn't have an established new-ball partner," Pollock explained. "It wasn't until the next series in South Africa that Mike Procter joined me so I think we were pretty pleased with having come out with a draw at Lord's."

"Then up at Trent Bridge we were in awful trouble at 43 for 4 before Graeme and Peter van der Merwe came together and Graeme played one of the greatest innings of his career." Graeme Pollock's 125 took him two hours and 20 minutes - he made 34 in 70 minutes before lunch and then 91 out of 102 in a memorable 70-minute spell after lunch. It was described by EW Swanton in the *Daily Telegraph* as "an innings which in point of style and power, of ease and beauty of execution, is fit to rank with anything in the annals of the game."

Pollock, just 21, was already acknowledged as one of the finest of all left-handed batsmen and seemed set to dominate world cricket for many years. But it turned out to be his one and only Test century in England. He was named, along with his brother, in the

squad to tour England again five years later but the tour was cancelled at the eleventh hour and South Africa did not return to Test cricket for more than 20 years.

"In those days I was a little bit superstitious about watching him," his brother said, "and I actually hid at the back of the dressing-room for most of the innings. When I did finally come out, it was to see him get out. There was a little bit of controversy, he didn't think he actually hit it - the TV cameras showed that he did but he wasn't so happy to go and he usually was quite keen to walk. But I missed most of it and watched it on TV later that evening. It was also our mother's birthday, and by the end of the day he'd got a hundred and I'd knocked over the first two England wickets."

Thanks to Graeme Pollock, South Africa had recovered to 269 all out before his brother took over - "I was essentially a fast bowler who bowled his away-swingers," he said. One of those away-swingers accounted for the young Geoffrey Boycott, caught behind for a second-ball duck, and then Ken Barrington was bowled for one to put England in trouble at stumps. On the following day Colin Cowdrey scored a century to rescue England in the same way as Graeme Pollock had done for his side, but Peter Pollock finished with 5 for 53 to restrict England to 240.

Half-centuries in the second innings by Barlow, Ali Bacher and Graeme Pollock - who made 59 - set England a target of 319 to win but once again Peter Pollock struck an early blow, removing Bob Barber for one before the end of the third day. In truth, England never really recovered - Boycott took two hours 30 minutes to make 16, exactly the same amount of time Graeme Pollock had taken over his 125. Only Peter Parfitt took the fight to the South Africans but when he was last out, bowled by Peter



Graeme (left) and Peter Pollock on the 1965 tour which brought South Africa their only post-war Test series victory in England *Hulton Getty*

Pollock for 86, South Africa had won by 94 runs. Pollock finished with 5 for 34 in the second innings and is still the only South African to have taken 10 wickets in a Test match in England.

"That game effectively won the series for us," he said. The final Test, at The Oval, was

drawn and so South Africa won a series in England for the second time, and the only time since the war. "It was a dramatic turning point for South African cricket," Peter Pollock added. "To come to England and beat England was always the dream. It was regarded as the ultimate achievement and the next

five years became perhaps the greatest period in South African cricket history. But, you know, for a lot of our cricketers of that generation that finally got isolated, the team that is regarded as the best South Africa ever produced, they would all agree that it all started at Trent Bridge."

In his capacity as convenor of the South African selectors, Peter Pollock will be back to watch a Test match at Trent Bridge today for the first time, and will have the pleasure of watching his son Shaun attempting to emulate his father's bowling and his uncle's batting.

"If in 1965 someone had told me that, in 33 years' time, you'll be here to watch your son playing for South Africa - well, it would have seemed a bit of a tall order to me," Peter Pollock said. I suggested we should hope for another such match. "Yes, it was a fine game of cricket," he said.



Peter Pollock at Trent Bridge this week *Peter Jay*

De Mulder shows early pace

SAILING

BY STUART ALEXANDER
in Cowes

AFTER TESTING weather in the two days of inshore races in the Solent, the 27 yachts in the Rolex Commodore's Cup were facing the problem of coaxing best performances over 175 miles of light conditions in the Channel race last night.

There were just five knots of westerly breeze at the start off Cowes as they headed west towards Poole before turning back up the Channel to Brighton, with England's Red

team 40-footer *Victrie 5* showing some early pace in the hands of Tony de Mulder.

Needing to make something of a comeback from their fourth position overall, the England team were hoping experience would pay. But also wanting to make amends were the German Red team, who saw their top place in the nine, three-boat teams taken away from them by Netherlands' Red.

The German small boat, *Harad Bruning's* *Topas*, was successfully protested by the Netherlands' Green team's top-scoring boat, *Koerdt Jansen's* old 43-footer *Cisoe*.

With three wins in a very satisfying morning session, Britain's Chris Law, No 2 in the world rankings, was heading for a semi-final place in the match race on Lake Constance in Germany. But having a more tricky time on the 300 metre course which features 10 wind generating machines was Andy Beadsworth. He mirrored his British rival's results with three losses.

"He seemed nervous, angry and upset, especially after being disqualified for a collision with US Virgin Islands America's Cup skipper Peter Holmberg," said a spokesman. "He

was making mistakes he would not normally make."

Italy's Giovanni Soldini is expected to win the Atlantic Alone Race from Falmouth to Charleston tomorrow. His Open 60, *Fila*, had slowed to just over six knots with 450 miles to go yesterday, but he was still over 700 miles ahead of Britain's Mike Golding in Group 4, despite the Hampshire man's new £1m yacht averaging over 11 knots.

Another Briton, Mike Gar-side, was threatening in the Open 50 class, his Alpha Magellan less than 90 miles behind US-based Frenchman Jean-Pierre Mouligne in Cray Valley.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Pressure, hell at that age I didn't know how to wipe my backside." *An American spectator on the plight of the new professional golfer Justin Rose.*

"I've had no offers yet but I am available." *Justin Rose waiting by the telephone for the sponsorship deals to come in.*

"He may look like a gangly kid but he is incredibly strong. Just look at his hands. They are capable of strangling a tiger." *Hercules? No. Justin Rose, according to his manager... his father, Ken.*

"If Tiger wants a sip from this claret jug, he'll be more than welcome." *Mark O'Meara invites his friend Tiger Woods round to see his new ornament.*

"I saw Dick Advocaat sitting with his head in his hands when it was 3-0, and that was worth the admission money alone."

The Shelbourne coach, Dermot Keely, could not help looking on the bright side after Advocaat's Rangers came back to beat his side 5-3.

"I would fight Eubank and I would class it as unfinished business and I need to get it out of my system." *Irish boxer Steve Collins gives his approval to any plans regarding Collins v Eubank III.*

"Although I always thought golf was a poof's game, I now like it more than football." *West Ham's Julian Dicks looks for a*

career elsewhere if he cannot recover from his knee injury.

"We were very stupid and we apologise unreservedly for our behaviour." *Reinstated Newcastle chairman Freddie Shepherd relies on the Toon Army's generosity to forgive and forget.*

"It's the first century I've got since I got married, so I'm blaming it on that." *Noel Pearson by South Africa cricket captain Hansie Cronje.*

"We are fed up with being treated like cattle. So we are going to behave like cattle." *Laurent, 'albert speaks for the riders as they temporarily boycotted the start of the 12th stage of the Tour de France amid more doping allegations.*

Casiraghi confident of striking rich vein

THE SCENE was typical of many a London flat during this summer's World Cup finals. A few pals sitting on the sofa, glued to the biggest game of football ever televised, passing the nibbles round and waiting to see who Brazil were going to play at centre-forward.

Yet in this particular pad two Italian friends might have been expecting a rather grander invitation than to get the Cokes from the kitchen during the next commercial break.

For Pierluigi Casiraghi and Gianfranco Zola were Italy's first-choice striking partnership in Euro '96. Zola went on to become England's Footballer of the Year in inspiring Chelsea's 1987 FA Cup triumph, not to mention scoring his country's winner at Wembley three months earlier, and Casiraghi struck the goal that clinched Italy's place in France '98, a play-off winner against Russia last November.

Chelsea's latest Italian import is settling in well for the new season at Stamford Bridge. Pete Lansley met him

As if to emphasise the ephemeral nature of footballing glory, neither made the cut for Italy's World Cup squad.

Now Casiraghi is ensconced in London with wife Barbara and his 17-month-old son, Andre, after his £5.4m transfer from Lazio. On Thursday evening he and Zola were preparing for an assault on the English Premiership at Chelsea's Harlington training ground. The duo were leading the head tennis sessions as the planes flew in at nearby Heathrow and at any other club, they could look forward to heading the team list three weeks from now.

But, being Italian, they are accustomed to teams rotating personnel. That should help in the coming season at Chelsea.

"I have settled in really well with the Chelsea team and not just because there are several Italians here," said Casiraghi, a Mark Hateley fan who spent the first four years of his career outside Italy's top division with Monza and has always relied on hard work and strong running to supplement a modest goals ratio: 86 in 304 club games, 13 in 43 for Italy.

"Chelsea have a truly international squad and it is good we all get on. At Lazio, there will not have been any World Cup winners returning to training but here Chelsea are now competing at a very high international level. It is just like in Italy where at certain clubs they have so many international players."

Lazio may not have Frank Leboeuf or Marcel Desailly returning to training with the ultimate medal in football but, significantly for Casiraghi, they will have Marcelo Salas. The Chilean's £12m arrival was the writing on the wall for Casiraghi, who had also been jettisoned at club level, despite scoring four Uefa Cup goals en route to the final, where Lazio lost to Internazionale. An Italian Cup winner's medal was some consolation as the club slipped to seventh in Serie A.

"I gave my all in five years with Lazio but, with new players and management coming in, it was the right time for a new challenge," said the former Juventus player. "It was not frustrating because I played in

the Italian Cup and Uefa Cup finals and it was time to move."

The Lazio president who sanctioned Casiraghi's transfer now holds the key to his hopes of an international recall. "I am very happy for Dino Zoff to be made the national manager," Casiraghi said, "because he is a great Italian sportsman. But the first thing for me is to play well for Chelsea and if other things come, they come. He was my manager at Juventus and Lazio and also president at Lazio so I know him quite well."

It was in Rome that Casiraghi befriended another major talent to miss out on France '98, Paul Gascoigne. "It's just a shame he's had a lot of injuries. He was a great person outside the field at Lazio, very simpatico and happy-go-lucky with the team. We all liked him and were upset when he left Lazio," Casiraghi said.

"I'm surprised he was left



Player-manager Gianluca Vialli gives Pierluigi Casiraghi a few pointers

PA

out of the England squad because he had played in all the lead-up games. He needs to have a lot of trust [shown in him by the management] to bring the best out of him."

Casiraghi's new manager clearly has faith in him though, as at Juventus in the early 1990s, Gianluca Vialli will be after his shirt. "I am available for selection and will keep myself as fit as possible," said the

34-year-old player-manager. "Possibly then, of course, Casiraghi will score 35 goals this season and I hope he keeps me out of the team. But he'll need a rest sometimes."

Competition for places at club and international level will not faze Casiraghi, whether it be with Brian Laudrup and Tore Andre Flo at Stamford Bridge, or Christian Vieri and Roberto Baggio for Italy.

"I knew there were four or five world-class forwards here at Chelsea when I joined and it's a good thing for the club," he said. "I'm the last one in as well, and I have no guarantees in my contract. But if I'm not selected one game, I will hope to come on at half-time. I have played 43 times for Italy and would like to play again but it's not the most important thing on my mind. Chelsea is now."

Poles apart in the heart of Wales

Holding a crack Krakow side to a draw looks like being the high point of lowly Newtown's Uefa Cup campaign

BY NICHOLAS HARLING

THE TRANQUILITY of Newtown, a quiet town in the heart of mid-Wales, was interrupted on Wednesday by a short, sudden burst of euphoria caused by the local football team's momentous achievement. They had just held a crack Polish side to a goalless draw.

But not quite everyone was ecstatic. Among those with reservations was Danny, the "Sarth London" groundhopper. "This must be one of the worst football matches I have ever seen," he said midway through the second half of the Uefa Cup tie against Wisla Krakow.

Among the Polish club's supporters was a quartet, who having trekked 1,500 miles across Europe in a battered Fiat Panda, were apprehended after ransacking a local sports shop. "We let them off with a caution," PC Kevin Scourfield explained. "It was bad enough for them being caught in possession of a Blackburn Rovers shirt." Mind you, he can talk. The officer supports Wrexham.

Unlike the Poles, Danny left before the end, deciding that a local hostelry was more inviting.

The expansion in recent years of Uefa's club competitions - mainly as a result of the fragmentation of countries like the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia - has opened up no end of possibilities for the likes of Danny.

The Uefa Cup and the European Cup both have to start in the middle of July to accommodate the extra fixtures and this week's first qualifying round of the two competitions featured nine clubs from the British Isles.

One of that eccentric breed who devotes his life to chalking off different football grounds the world over, Danny presumably left early because the spectacle on offer lagged behind what he had enjoyed elsewhere in recent times.

A few months ago he was in Burkina Faso for the African Championships. Even the at-



The Kerry Hills form the backdrop as League of Wales side Newtown take on Wisla Krakow, from southern Poland, in the Uefa Cup

Christopher Jones

mosphere outside various World Cup grounds in France, where he could not afford the touts' escalating prices, was preferable.

But then it takes something to stir the occupants of Latham Park, a charming picturesque ground nestled between the Kerry Hills. Only when Newtown's part-timers face their fierce rivals from Caersws in the League of Wales do the locals really give vent to their feelings. Their team who had surpassed themselves against the third-best club side in Poland, opponents laced with half a dozen internationals, could certainly have done with louder support from the crowd of 1,500.

But if those supporters were celebrating in the bar afterwards, the players most certainly were not. "They refused to let photographers take pictures in the dressing-room," the manager, Brian Coyne, explained. "They know they won nothing tonight and that it is going to be very difficult in Krakow. I'm pleased with that attitude."

Coyne, whose main claim to fame is the one game he played in Celtic's midfield, is a likeable Glaswegian now in his sixth season managing the Powys club. "Players come here not because of the money but because he has made his reputation instilling good habits in them," said Trevor Jones, the former chairman.

For all that, Jones' successor, Keith Harding, knows that Newtown are unlikely to make a fortune, if anything, from the Uefa Cup unless, by some miracle, they overcome Krakow and are paired with one of the real big boys. Uefa's insistence on 80 per cent of the capacity being seated had forced Harding to spend £5,000 on temporary seating blocks used last week for the Open.

Fortunately, however, for the chairman, Polish TV had decided in advance that both legs were worth covering live. That left some of us cynics expressing the view that, accordingly, Krakow had deliberately held themselves back in an attempt to stimulate extra spectator

and TV interest for the second leg. How mistaken can a person be? "No, no, no, you are wrong," Marek Kolesny, their team director, said. "In Krakow you'll see a much better team."

That contrary view does little to offset the fear that Newtown could suffer the kind of humiliation that was the fate of Barry, slaughtered 8-0 by Dynamo Kiev. "We'll have to guard against that," admitted Coyne, who in the absence of the leading scorer Kevin Morrison had set out his stall with a five-man defence.

There were, after all, still vivid memories in Coyne's mind of Newtown's only previous venture into the Uefa Cup, a 4-1 home drubbing and

a 7-1 aggregate defeat by Skonto Riga two years ago. Consequently, the Welsh players enjoyed only a month-long break, but after six weeks back in training, they displayed all the necessary stamina and guts.

Colin Reynolds, a resolute captain, a builder by trade - who like his team-mates will have to take a week's holiday for the return - was a member of that reinforced and overworked defence. "The manager gave us all a job to do and we did them," he said proudly. "They couldn't break us down." But wasn't that for a home team, albeit a home team in a hopelessly inferior league, being a trifle negative?

"Not negative," Reynolds replied. "Let's say a little bit defensive or cautious maybe. What you've got to remember is that the whole point of playing 50-odd games a season is these two games. We could still sneak a goal in Poland."

Rather more likely, alas, is the prospect that Krakow will sneak five or six.

Whatever the case Newtown will officially charter 61 supporters to Krakow, 62 if Mike Jones is allowed to fork out £375 to join the four-day excursion. "I've been bitten by the bug," admitted Jones, a veteran of the Riga trip, "but I'll have to ask Wendy first. It's her birthday next week."

The best of luck, boys!

United call off signing of Foe

MARC-VIVIAN FOE's transfer to Manchester United has again been called off. The Cameroon midfielder has returned home after tests revealed he is still not fit.

In a statement, United said: "Marc-Vivien Foe is still recovering from a serious ankle injury and has returned to his own club, Lens, where his treatment and rehabilitation will continue. It's not expected that he will return to Manchester United in the near future."

Roy Keane must wait another two days before making his long-awaited comeback for United. The Republic of Ireland midfielder was due to make his first appearance in a United shirt for 10 months at Birmingham today after recovering from his cruciate ligament injury, but is now likely to miss the game with an ankle strain.

John Gregory, the Aston Villa manager, has tried to play down speculation linking Dwight Yorke with a move to United by insisting he was yet to receive a bid for the striker from Old Trafford.

Speaking before announcing the signing of David Unsworth for £3m from West Ham yesterday, Gregory said: "I still haven't received any formal offer from Manchester United for Dwight Yorke. It hasn't happened, yet and I hope it never happens."

West Ham will make up for the disappointment of losing Unsworth by signing two new defenders. Harry Redknapp, the West Ham manager, hopes to secure Neil Ruddock and Javier Margas next week.

Ruddock will move on a free transfer from Liverpool and West Ham secured first option on Chilean World Cup player Margas towards the end of last season. The 29-year-old will sign from Universidad Catolica for £2m as soon as he is granted a work permit.

Arsenal will play their Champions' League home matches at Wembley this coming season after being given the official go-ahead from the Football Association.

The Gunners had already been given clearance by Wembley and European football's governing body, Uefa, to make the lucrative switch from Highbury to increase their attendances for the games from 35,000 to around 70,000.

In announcing their backing for the move, the FA said that this was a one-off decision that would not necessarily be repeated in the future.

"The stadium is traditionally used only for major flagship events such as internationals, finals and play-offs. This is what makes Wembley a special place for the whole of English football. The FA is committed to preserving this," the statement read.

"Bearing in mind Arsenal's exceptional circumstances, the demands of Uefa and the fact that the matches are in Europe's premier club competition, the FA feels able to consent on this occasion. The FA looks forward to a successful season for all the English clubs involved in European football."

Boro close on Moriero

THE MIDDLESBROUGH manager, Bryan Robson, yesterday revealed his plans for the forthcoming Premiership season by agreeing a £5m deal for Francesco Moriero, the Italy winger, and signing the full-back Gustavo Lombardi on loan.

Moriero, who impressed last season with the Serie A team Internazionale, has yet to speak to Middlesbrough about personal terms, but the 29-year-old would form a daunting midfield partnership with Paul Gascoigne.

Lombardi, meanwhile, has signed from the Argentinean side River Plate until the end of the year.

Robson was optimistic that

Moriero would agree terms after Internazionale accepted a £5m offer, as the club are ready to propose a three-year deal worth around £3m. Robson said: "I'm hopeful that he'll sign soon. He's quick, powerful and has good technique, and he plays in a position where I believe we need strengthening."

Robson has been monitoring Moriero for a year, and sees him as the ideal replacement for Craig Hignett, who moved to Aberdeen under the Bosman ruling last month. If Moriero does sign, he will be the third former international player at the Riverside, joining the striker Marco Branca and the central defender Gianluca Festa.

The Rangers coach, Dick Advocaat, is close to signing the Romanian central defender Daniel Prodan, who has 40 international caps. Atletico Madrid's 26-year-old will be Advocaat's seventh summer signing - pending the securing of a work permit. "At first we wanted Colin Hendry and he was anxious to come here, but when that didn't happen we looked to Prodan," Advocaat said.

Leeds' Australian international Harry Kewell could miss the start of the new season after being forced home from the club's tour of Sweden with ankle ligament damage.

WEEKEND FIXTURES

TODAY

FOOTBALL

FRIENDLY MATCHES (3.0 unless stated): Alderley v Hartlepool; Ayrton v Birmingham XI; Altrincham v Stockport XI; Ashton United v Manchester United XI; Barrow v Chorley; Barnet v Gateshead (1.0); Birmingham City v Manchester United; Boreham Wood v Nottingham Forest; Bradford v Derby; Bromsgrove v Coventry; Cambridge v Northampton; Carlisle v Crystal Palace XI; Celtic v Tottenham; Chesham v Wycombe; Cliftonville v Peterborough; Colchester v King's Lynn; Darlington v Brighton; Darlington v Portsmouth (7.30); Farnborough v Farnborough; Halifax v Burnley; Harlow v West Ham XI; Huddersfield v Middlesbrough; Hendon v Stevenage; Hereford v Stoke; Home Farm Everton v Swindon (7.30); Kettering v Ipswich; Killiney City v Brentford (7.30); Livingston v Reading (12.45);

PREMIER LEAGUE

Middlesbrough v Man United Res (2.0); Motherwell v West Ham; Northwich v Rochdale; Partick v Le Havre; Richmond v Darlington; Selby Town v Hull; St Patrick's Ath v Bolton; Thame United v Aylesbury; Welling v Millwall; Winton Alb v Nuneaton; Worthing v Charlton; Wovil v Sunderland; Dover v Barnet; Enfield v Norwich; Lincoln United v Stamford; Bangor City v Aris Salonika; Forest Green v Bath; Ayr v Walsall; Bristol Rovers v Port Vale; Boston United v Grimsby; Cardiff v West Brom; Halesowen v Tamworth; Exeter v Oxford United; Blackpool v Sheffield Wednesday; Gresley Rovers v US Rugby; Luton v Arsenal.

RUGBY LEAGUE

JUBA SPORTS SUPER LEAGUE: Castleford v Warrington (6.05) (at Cordell RUFC).

SPEEDWAY

ELITE LEAGUE: Coventry v Ipswich (7.30); Eastbourne v Poole (7.30).

PREMIER LEAGUE

Berwick v Stoke (7.0); Peterborough v Newcastle (7.30).

PREMIER LEAGUE FOUR TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

Arena Essex v Exeter v Isle of Wight v Reading (8.0).

OTHER SPORTS

ATHLETICS: Bupa AAA Championships (Birmingham).

MOTOR RACING: Auto Trader RAC British Touring Car Championship (Silverstone).

TENNIS: European Junior Championships (Hatfield).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

FRIENDLY MATCHES: Gillingham v Leicester (3.0); Leek Town v Tranmere (1.0); Preston v Celtic (3.0).

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL

England v Sweden (2.0) (at Dagenham & Redbridge).

RUGBY LEAGUE

JUBA SPORTS SUPER LEAGUE: St Helens v Wigan (6.45) (at Vetch Field, Swansea).

FIRST DIVISION

Featherstone v Widnes (6.0); Hull KR v Swinton; Hunslet v Wakefield (3.30); Keltyheir v Dewsbury; Leigh v Whitehaven.

SECOND DIVISION

Batley v Doncaster (3.15); Bramley v York; Lancashire Lynx v Oldham (at Preston Grasshoppers); Workington v Barrow.

OTHER SPORTS

ATHLETICS: Bupa AAA Championships (Birmingham).

MOTOR RACING: Auto Trader RAC British Touring Car Championship (Silverstone).

TENNIS: European Junior Championships (Hatfield).

Two unbeaten colts in pursuit of a champion's crown may fall to an older rival. By Richard Edmondson

Even if High-Rise is victorious today he is unlikely to qualify as the best transport Olivier Peslier has ever enjoyed. The rider of Hellasio and Peintre Celebre is nevertheless anticipating the establishment of yet another European champion. "He is a very great horse and he is in good form," the Frenchman said yesterday. "He's strong and he likes the fighting. He fights very well. If he wins the King George he will be the best horse in Europe."

This belief may ignore the claims of Dream Well, the notable absentee from this afternoon's championship. He beat City Honours in the Irish Derby by further than High-Rise managed at Epsom, though this is not a factor which troubles Peslier greatly. "Dream Well needs the ground soft and he is not the same with good ground."

The jockey is more troubled by the collision with a different generation. "Now it is the competition with the old horses," he

in the saddle before the great race.

"The bookmakers have taken a view that our horse is one of the two or three best in Europe," he said yesterday. "Well we've got a Derby winner in here, so why isn't he favourite for the race? It seems incredible that a Group Two horse should be in front of a Derby winner. I know the potential is there and we're hopeful, but why is he favourite?"

"I suppose it must be Henry Cecil. The bookmakers are frightened to death of him and his good record in big races. What we can say is that we're got a three-year-old who is definitely improving and has improved already but, when it comes to pricing, the bookmakers are being very stingy."

Indeed, this expectation about the Classic crop means there could well be advantage elsewhere.

Godolphin seem numerically well-placed to step in with

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three runners, but there are doubts about each of their entries. Swain has not won in five outings since he captured this contest 12 months ago and the suggestion remains that such a murderous contest has dulled his competitive edge for ever. Davlami tries this distance for the first time and may be panting dreadfully as he comes past the stands, while Happy Valentine is described by his camp as a "pace-setter".

This guaranteed swift tempo means there are serious possibilities about unheralded old horses in the contest. Romanov has beaten Silver Patriarch twice this year, once when he had a weight concession and again when the run of race was against John Dunlop's colt.

Certainly the Arundel camp go into the King George without a sense of inferiority. "The horse is very, very well and so there is all to play for," Dunlop said yesterday. "He gets the mile and a half really well and we want a strong gallop."

Team Arundel will get the and it is worth speculating the will attract the garlands a while. SILVER PATRIARCH (map 3.50) is the value choice

[illegible]

Simon Holt of Channel 4 Racing analyses today's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes

Daylam: Unlucky at Royal Ascot behind Faithful Son and confirmed himself top class when turning the tables in the Eclipse Stakes. Has a splendid turn of foot but unproven over this trip.

Happy Valentine: Not really this class, though a useful performer and won in Listed company at Kempton on latest start. Pace-maker for stalemateds.

Romanov: Has trained on well this season, beating Silver Patriarch (now six better off) at Newmarket and then finishing a time second in France. High-class colt who never runs a bad race.

Silver Patriarch: Last year's Derby runner-up and St Leger winner, he was unsuited by the slow gallop when fourth in France last time. Earlier outpointed Swain in the Coronation Cup at Epsom. Sure to go well.

Swain: Slogged home in soft ground to win this last year but below par behind Posidonia here at the Royal meeting. Earlier second in Dubai World Cup and behind Silver Patriarch at Epsom. Frankie Dettori's chosen mount.

High-Rise: Top-class colt, unbeaten in four starts. Bailed home in tremendous style to beat City Honours by a head in the Derby. Lament for this race and must be a threat to all.

Risk Material: Six times a winner in three starts but seems Groundless third standard at best and he could finish only seventh behind Dream Well in the Irish Derby last time. Needs to improve.

Royal Anthem: Steps up to the highest class following three straight wins including twice very impressive (talent idling in front) in the King Edward VII Stakes at the Royal meeting here. Clearly smart.

Conclusion: Given a strong end-to-end gallop no horse will stay this stiff mile and a half better than the current PATRIARCH who can give John Dettori a first King George. Despite the Derby form looking suspect, High-Rise will be a big danger and on racecourse performance has slightly better credentials than Royal Anthem. The consistent Romanov may prove best of the rest.

Presenting a new test for Carson to conquer

IT MAY not be possible to teach an old dog new tricks but Willie Carson, irrepressible yappy little terrier that he is, is doing his darnedest to learn 'em. At the age of 56 he has started over, trading, like so many sportsmen before him, the field of play for the microphone.

It is a transition that some make seamlessly but, as the World Cup panels showed, the ability to keep on running in a Liverpool and Newcastle shirt is no guarantee of success as a talking head. Carson, now in his second year with the BBC, quickly grasped that the job is no sinecure.

"Riding I knew," he said. "I was in control, I knew what to do, whether it was a selling plate or the Derby. It was what I did, and even when it was difficult, I could do it.

"Interviews then were OK, because there was no pressure. But being on this side, the side I am now, is a bit different. I'm still learning how to do it:

Four King George wins count for little as a former champion adapts to fresh roles. By Sue Montgomery

I know I'm not an expert and I do get apprehensive.

"People watch TV commentators and think that's easy. I could do that. It's only when you try to do it that you realise how difficult it is. The hardest thing is to stay relaxed and try to remember the points you want to get across without drying up or gabbling like a manic."

"I know racing; that's why I'm there, to try to get across to people what the game is all about. And not just the riding, all of it: the hard work involved in getting a horse sound and sane on to that strip of green grass, the skill involved in even just leading a fit thoroughbred fuelled with high-octane petrol round the paddock. I want to make the people watching feel that they are there, part of it."

Carson's heart is clearly in

the right place in this matter and in truth, as far as ex-jocks on TV are concerned, the Scot is not faced – with one notable exception – with a bunch of hard acts to follow. But he takes the job seriously enough to have gone to a media workshop during the close season to improve his skills.

"When you're 19 it's easy to learn," he said "At that age, what you're being taught sticks. But once you're older it takes longer. It really is more difficult to absorb things. And I forget names; I know the horse I'm talking about. I can see it in my mind, but I forget its bloody name. But I'm happy to say at least I don't feel the job is getting harder."

Today, with a large TV audience guaranteed for the race that is second in status only to

the Derby in Britain's Flat racing calendar, will be one of Carson's highest tests. And as a four-time winner of the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes on Dick Hern-trained horses, he should have much to share with his viewers.

Carson won on two Derby winners, Troy and Nashwan, so will be able to relate to the pressures being experienced by High-Rise's connections. He scored on the classy four-year-old, Ela-Mana-Moo, who, like Daylami, was stepping up in trip after winning the Eclipse.

But it is the 1985 winner, Petotski, the least fancied of the quartet when he won, that he picks as being the most memorable. "He was the one," he said. "He wasn't a hot pot like the others, but I did go there thinking I had a great chance. He was very much on the upgrade.

"And he beat six Group One winners that day. Petotski was a great big horse who had taken time to reach his poten-



tial and had not up to then shown that sort of form. But he was starting to improve and we knew he had it in him. Sadly, we lost him afterwards, he hurt a hock and was never the same again. But that win gave enormous satisfaction."

Which brings us neatly to another of today's runners, Royal Anthem, another great big progressive three-year-old stuffed full of potential. Carson is one of the team associated with the colt, owned by United States-based Ahmed Salman's Thoroughbred Corporation. "I've called the racing manager, chuckled Carson, "but I think that means I make the tea."

"We don't know if Royal Anthem is good enough to win this. But he is one of the few in the race who is certain to improve on what he's done already."

Shows potential, sure to improve, could be very good. Like horse, like TV pundit.

ASCOT
2.00: SONG OF FREEDOM
 has a solid chance on form but, essentially, it would seem best for punters to sit this one out.

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

MARKET RASEN

3.15: French-bred Kazawari was easily on his British debut, beating The Cavalier Man at Worcester. The runner-up has won since, finishing in the form **MIGHTY PHANTOM**, though, has looked a useful recruit and could be better value.

000

3.45: Daraydan was decent over hurdles and is unbeaten in two runs over fences. But he did not jump with relish last time. Carl Llewellyn will try to bounce late on Time Won't Wait but this one has never won beyond 2m of. **ALQAIRAWAN** looks a better bet. Heaves fast ground.

000

4.15: Terdad and Loveyoumills have to be respected but, on the Flat, were inferior to **GEORGE DILLINGHAM**. This consistent eight-year-old looks a winner for Lorcán Wyer.

000

4.45: With Mick Easterby hitting top form at Ascot yesterday Dapatch, who needs strong handling, could easily be another with Tony McCoy in the plate. But **DAHIYAN** stayed on well last time and could thwart them.

Killer Instinct sinks on maiden voyage

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON
at Ascot

HE CAME, he saw, he capitulated. Killer Instinct, the emperor of the Newmarket gallops, found the real thing all too much on his racecourse debut here yesterday. All the reports of his home prowess suddenly seemed rather silly as he trundled home behind Compton Admiral.

Killer Instinct went into the EBF Maiden Stakes as a 10-1

favourite for the 1999 2,000 Guineas. He came out of it looking almost as sad as his trainer, Henry Cecil. Coral, who must have been looking the other way, now go 12-1 for the Guineas next spring. The Tote are more realistic at 20-1.

The reality was that Killer Instinct ran rather like a big, old boat. Those who have believed the radiant reports which have emanated from Headquarters have attached themselves to an equine Titanic.

Progressing from searing gallops performances to race-course proficiency is rather like doing a best man's speech. In front of the long bedroom mirror on your own it's usually fluent and cohesive, but before the shocking presence of an audience it can be all a bit different.

There was no sign of the deflation to come, though, when Killer Instinct entered the parade ring yesterday. He looked as well-muscled and imposing

as his father, Zafonic, had as a juvenile, rather like the sort of three-year-olds he has been thrashing on the gallops. He shone with a finish which would have made an army corporal proud.

At action's start, Killer Instinct jinked right before being tucked in behind the pace-making no-hoper Gold Honor. The stride was extravagant, the hooves pawed the air. A full-on he was in front, but there was no explosion, rather

a fizzle. Compton Admiral scooted up the outside. The 4-9 favourite appeared rather slow.

"At home he's got cruising speed and he quickens up very well hut today, I suppose, first time up, he was just ready for a race," Cecil observed. "The idea was to give him a lead, teach him something, and then let him quicken up. But when he went to quicken up he was looking around and he didn't really put it together."

"I think he's better than that

and next time you'll see a better horse than you did today. I'm sure it's there and let's hope next time he does it."

A more desperate intervention came from the colt's owner, Prince Ahmed Salman. "I promise you he will win the 2,000 Guineas," he said on departure. "You can take my word for that." You had to feel rather sorry for him.

Yesterday's results and today's evening cards, page 24

Butcher the ideal partner for Atherton

ENGLAND'S CRICKET has, quite deservedly, been given a good deal of stick this summer. There have been some dreadful performances, which made Mike Atherton and Mark Butcher's inspirational opening stand all the more surprising in the Fourth Test against South Africa here yesterday. Suddenly, after suffering all sorts of indignities, England have something of which they can be justifiably proud.

The effects of their opening stand should be far reaching. First, it will greatly have helped confidence in the England dressing room. As their stand progressed and one cover drive followed another, it will have done the batsmen in the pavilion a power of good. It will have shown them what is possible.

A side which has been playing bad cricket is obviously short of self-belief. Atherton and Butcher will have helped reinforce England's scant supply. The most important effect of all is that this stand has solved the problem of trying to find the right partner for Atherton.

Butcher suggested he was the man with his 77 in the first Test at Edgbaston, when he and Atherton put on 179. He then had the bad luck to be injured but was fortunate that neither Steve James nor Nick Knight were able to take their chances.

This innings by Butcher will



HENRY BLOFELD
AT TRENT BRIDGE

surely mean that he will remain for some time as Atherton's partner. If they continue to be successful they will together take the pressure off the other batsmen and allow them to play as they want, rather than as they are forced to do if they keep finding themselves at the wicket when the ball is still new.

Opening batsmen, like opening bowlers, perform better in pairs and the history of Test cricket is littered with them both. Atherton and Butcher will improve in partnership as they grow more accustomed to each other.

They will learn to help each other in difficult situations and when one is out of touch he will be protected by his partner. Another obvious advantage is that

they will develop a better understanding in their running between the wickets.

They will open in the last two Tests of the summer and in the five in Australia in the winter. It will greatly help England's chances in Australia to have an established opening pair, although it will not be easy for them as Glenn McGrath and company will do their best to break up this partnership.

It is also very much to England's advantage that they now have a left-handed, right-handed combination to open the innings and it was clear that this unsettled the South African bowlers, especially Allan Donald, who did not bowl well in the first two spells in this innings. Shaun Pollock, on the other hand, had no difficulty in adjusting his line.

Atherton is a world-class opening batsman and is having a good series, but Butcher was a revelation. This was a much sounder innings than the 77 he made at Edgbaston and he is an excellent player of fast bowling.

What is also most admirable about Butcher is the way he has lifted himself after his disappointing tour of the West Indies, which ended with a "pair" in the last Test. To bounce back from that and the injury has called for character and he has shown plenty of it.



The England opener Michael Atherton ducks low to avoid a bouncer at Trent Bridge yesterday David Ashdown

Brown lends a helping hand

By MIKE CAREY
at Edgbaston

HARRY BRIND, the English Cricket Board's inspector of pitches, arrived yesterday in good time to reassure himself - and later Warwickshire - that the chatter of 21 wickets on the first day was just one of those things and that there would be no repercussions for the county.

Certainly, batting seemed a much more joyous pastime and even Brian Lara got into double figures. But the real proof about the pitch's quality came when Warwickshire felt the need to expose Doug Brown and his broken finger to the Essex seamers for the second time in the match.

Brown had courageously appeared in the first innings not long after returning from hospital. At that stage, without adding to his 26, he helped Neil Smith scrape a priceless 17 runs for the last wicket.

Warwickshire were in the much more luxurious position of leading by 288 when their ninth wicket fell yesterday. They had batted better, although too many batsmen followed Lara's example of getting into the 20's and then getting out.

Additionally they also probably felt that Essex, knowing what was required and with time on their side, would bat with greater discipline the second time around. And, of course, they were a bowler short.

For Brown, it was another brave performance. He ducked into his first ball from Neil Williams, which failed to bounce as expected, and he was in considerable pain from a blow on the left arm. If anything, this just concentrated his mind.

As Smith stood firm at the other end, Essex could barely conceal their frustration. Brown attracted more than his share of short-pitched stuff in a bowling performance which was not noted for its intelligence - not too often did anyone try to discover if he could play a yorker with one hand. In the end, though, it was Smith who perished on the mid-wicket boundary, having made 47 from 48 balls.

Paul Prichard and Ian Flanagan then embarked on the task of making 332 for victory.

Caddick enjoys Durham culling spree

By DAVID LLEWELLYN
at Taunton

Durham 259 and 128
Somerset 318 and 73-0
Somerset win by 10 wickets

ANDREW CADDICK now has a veritable warren of Durham bunnies in his collection. The English fast bowler picked up five more innocents in the second innings to take his total against the North-East county to

51. More importantly his ninth 10-wicket haul in his career took him to 48 wickets for the season and he added Somerset out of the lower reaches of the County Championship as they coasted to victory inside three days.

It was a bizarre day's cricket from tail-wagging start to farcical finish. Durham lost at every turn. To begin with they were unable to prise loose the last two Somerset wickets until 90 runs had been added, thanks

to some brazen stroke play by Mushtaq Ahmed, Adrian Pierson and Caddick. The late flurry took the initiative away from Durham and they came out for the second innings having first to wipe out a deficit they should never have conceded.

They then proceeded to bat as if they had a healthy advantage. John Morris survived a chance when he slashed recklessly to Pierson shoulder high in the gully. It would have

been a great catch, but it was not a costly miss. Morris had not got off the mark and he was first out three overs later caught at slip. Two balls later the same howler, Graham Rose, accounted for Jon Lewis.

Nick Speak, the captain David Boon and Paul Collingwood followed quickly and apart from some graft by Jimmy Daley and a few swishes and wafts from the last pair, Melvyn Betts and Steve Harmison, Somerset had little difficulty in whipping them out. They were helped hugely by some appalling shots and an apparent lack of stomach for the fight on the part of Durham.

Somerset came out needing a paltry 70 for their third Championship win of the season and the captain Peter Bowler hit two boundaries in the first over. Thereafter, he rarely let up and even the more prosaic Piran Holloway joined in.

What should have been a moment of joy for Somerset supporters was reduced to low farce, first by an apparent misinterpretation of the England and Wales Cricket Board's rule book, then by an adherence to the letter of the law when common sense might have prevailed.

The result of tea not being taken when Durham's dismal second innings ended at 3.47pm - well within the stipulated 30

minutes of the scheduled interval at 4.10pm - meant that both teams trooped off when 32 overs remained, with Somerset needing just two for victory.

Boon attempted to call everyone back but to no avail and as the players disappeared into the pavilion, the crowd let its displeasure be known. Twenty minutes later Bowler drove the first ball down the ground for another boundary, then it was handshakes all round.

Gallian unable to save ship

By JOHN COLLIS
at Portsmouth

Nottinghamshire 128 & 243
Hampshire 301 & 73-0
Hants win by seven wickets

JASON GALLIAN sailed on yesterday but one by one his Argonauts jumped ship. The former Lancashire and England opener showed the cussedness of an Australian, which, of course, he is by birth, in his attempt to nurse Nottinghamshire to a score they could bowl at. And while Paul Johnson was with him, hauling the visitors towards parity of score, there was hope of a real contest yesterday.

As it is, yet another county ground will have a silent Saturday, and again those members who have to work during the week will wonder whether it really is worth continuing to subscribe. But accountability rules while there are hospitality packages to be sold to people who would not dream of watching cricket in their own time.

Johnson's contribution was a typically determined innings of short-armed jabs and opportunist hits, but when he was third out with the Nottinghamshire score at 180 they

were just seven ahead, so another big innings was required. Tim Robinson would have been an ideal candidate if able bodied, but Nixon McLean probably ended his first-class career on the first day, breaking the opener's wrist with a bouncer that failed to climb.

As in the first innings, the Yorkshire reject, Alex Morris, was McLean's most effective bowling partner, and second time around he outperformed the West Indian. Morris has taken to life in the south, knocking over wickets at 18 apiece. Although not of true pace, he has the height to achieve occasionally disconcerting bounce.

Paul Franks stayed alongside Gallian for a while but by now Nottinghamshire seemed to have little appetite for battle, and their new opener carried his bat for his first century in his new colours. When he ran out of ship-mates Hampshire needed 71 to win. There were a few incidents - Jason Lane's fourth successive second-innings duck, and a disputed diving catch by Kevin Evans at long leg to dismiss John Stephenson - but at 3.15pm Hampshire cruised home to earn an extra day's shore leave.

Dakin's saving grace

JON DAKIN, the Leicestershire all-rounder who was only in the team as a late replacement for the injured James Ormond, yesterday came to the rescue against Sri Lanka on the opening day of their Vodafone Challenge match at Grace Road. Dakin was unbeaten on 63, his last score of the season, at the tea interval as Leicestershire reached 201 for 7, having improved from a perilous 61 for 6.

Leicestershire, having elected to bat, slumped to 59 for 5 in the first 25 overs as the ball

seamed around alarmingly in the morning session. The medium-pace, Chandika Hathurusingha claimed 3 for 10 in his opening spell.

At Northampton, Kim Barnett led Derbyshire's resistance after Northamptonshire forced them to follow on 383 runs behind. Barnett's unbeaten 50 guided his side to 150 for 3 in their second innings at tea, still requiring a further 233 to make the hosts bat again. Derbyshire had collapsed from 191 for 4 to 225 all out in the morning session.

Britannic Assurance County Championship

Somerset v Durham

TAUNTON (Day 3 of 4): Somerset (25pts) beat Durham (6) by 10 wickets.

Durham won toss.

DURHAM — First innings 259 (Boon 73, Speak 51; Caddick 5-116)

SOMERSET — First innings 318 (Harrison 4-57)

First Innings Count

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
A R K Pierson c Speight b Foster	37	0	6	93	123
Mushtaq Ahmed c Daley b Foster	37	0	6	32	33
A R Caddick not out	51	0	7	31	37
Extras (b1 b2 w6 nb10)	318				
Total (39.4 overs)	318				

Fall (cont): 9-262.

Bowling: M M Betts 25-6-80-2, S J Harrison 28-6-98-4, M J Foster 17-4-38-4, P O Collingwood 7-1-22-0, N C Phillips 12-2-56-0.

DURHAM — Second innings

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
J B Lewis bow b Rose	0	0	0	12	16
J E Morris c Pierson b Rose	9	0	2	8	13
N J Speak c and b Caddick	10	0	2	17	24
J A Daley c Mushtaq b Caddick	36	4	4	80	114
O C Boon b Caddick	0	0	0	1	0
P Collingwood c Trescott b Caddick	1	0	0	17	26
M P Speight c Pierson b Caddick	9	0	1	24	38
M J Foster st Burns b Mushtaq	5	0	0	9	9
N C Phillips c Rose b Mushtaq	5	0	1	25	24
M M Betts not out	20	0	3	29	36
S J Harrison c Rose b Mushtaq	18	0	3	14	22
Extras (b4 b5 nb8)	15				
Total (38.4 overs)	128				

Fall (10.2-13, 3-31, 4-31, 5-37, 6-76, 7-83, 8-83, 9-94).

Bowling: A R Caddick 17-4-49-5, G D Rose 11-4-35-2, Mushtaq Ahmed 9-2-26-3, A R K Pierson 1-0-11-0.

SOMERSET — Second innings

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
P O Bowler not out	44	0	9	35	44
P C L Holloway not out	25	0	5	39	44
Extras (b1 nb2)	72				
Total (11.3 overs)	140-2				

Did not bat: M E Trescott, M N Lathwell, K A Parsons, I M Burns, G O Rose, A O Pierson, Mushtaq Ahmed, A R Caddick, M Butcher.

Bowling: S J Harrison 4-0-29-0, M M Betts 2-0-11-0, M J Foster 4-1-20-0, N C Phillips 2-0-11-0.

Umpires: J H Harris and B Leadbeater.

Hampshire v Nottinghamshire

PORTSMOUTH (Day 3 of 4): Hampshire (23pts) beat Nottinghamshire (4) by seven wickets.

Hampshire won toss.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE — First innings 128 (McLean 4-45)

HAMPSHIRE — First innings 301 (Mascarenhas 89, Lane 67)

Second Innings Count

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
J E Gallian not out	66	0	11	215	311
P J Johnson b Mascarenhas	66	0	7	130	160
G F Archer c Lane b Hartley	7	0	0	4	4
P J Franks c Ayres b Morris	22	0	2	24	29
R C M Wood c Stephenson b Morris	9	0	1	18	22
P A Sprang c Morris b McLean	0	0	0	7	9
K P Evans c Whittaker b Morris	0	0	0	1	2
M N Bowen c Lane b McLean	2	0	0	8	6
R T Robinson not out	0	0	0	0	0
Extras (b6 nb2)	8				
Total (78.5 overs)	243				

Fall (cont): 3-180, 4-187, 5-223, 6-233, 7-238, 8-238, 9-243.

Bowling: N A M McLean 15.5-1-65-2, P J Hartley 16-2-38-2, J P Stephenson 7-1-18-0, S O Utter 11-1-15-0, A C Morris 12-1-35-4, K O James 12-2-34-0, A D Mascarenhas 7-1-36-1.

CRICKET SCOREBOARD

Hampshire — Second innings

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
J S Lane c Read b Evans	0	0	0	8	9
J P Stephenson c Evans b Bowen	0	0	1	18	22
G W White c Read b Bowen	16	0	3	20	29
K O James not out	29	0	6	49	61
IA N Aynes not out	19	0	2	33	44
Extras (b3)	23				
Total (for 26.2 overs)	73				

Fall: 1-0, 2-12, 3-27.

Did not bat: P R Whittaker, A D Mascarenhas, "S D Udal, A C Morris, P J Hartley, N A M McLean.

Bowling: M P Speight 6-1-23-1, M N Bowen 9-4-32-2, P A Sprang 3-1-6-0, U Alzall 1-2-0-0-0.

Umpires: J H Harris and O R Shepherd.

Warwickshire v Essex

EDGBASTON (Day 2 of 4): Warwickshire (4pts), Essex (4pts)

Warwickshire won toss.

WARWICKSHIRE — First innings 190

ESSEX — First innings 139 (Giddins 4-37)

WARWICKSHIRE — Second innings 23-1

Second Innings Count

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
N V Knight c Hamm b Such	29	0	3	52	75
A F Giles c Flanagan b Williams	53	0	8	117	159
M A Wagch c Pritchard b Such	7	0	1	20	28
"B C Lara c O R Law b Williams	25	0	4	55	71
T Frost c Pritchard b O R Law	23	0	4	54	76
K J Piper b O R Law	20	0	2	74	110
G Welch bow b Such	25	0	5	32	33
N M K Smith c Pritchard b Frost	47	3	4	48	54
E H Gidings b Williams	1	0	0	3	3
O R Brown not out	1	0	0	18	33
Extras (b4 b5 nb12)	32				
Total (80.2 overs)	280				

Fall: 1-5, 2-88, 3-106, 4-147, 5-154, 6-184, 7-221, 8-236, 9-237.

Bowling: M C Frost 18.2-4-64-2, N F Williams 19-5-68-3, P M Such 23-6-52-3, R C Frost 11-3-30-0, D R Law 9-2-36-2.

ESSEX — Second innings

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
P J Pritchard not out	11	0	2	31	46
I N Flanagan not out	29	1	4	33	40
Extras (b1 nb2)	3				
Total (for 0, 10.3 overs)	43				

To bat: S O Law, R C Frost, A P Grayson, S O Peters, 18 J Hyatt, O R Law, N F Williams, M C Frost, P M Such.

Bowling: E H Giddins 5-3-15-0, G Welch 4-0-23-0, A P Giles 1-0-4-0.

Umpires: H O Bird and T E Jesey.

Middlesex v Yorkshire

LORDS (Day 3 of 4): Middlesex (7pts), Yorkshire (4pts)

Middlesex won toss.

MIDDLESEX — First innings 448 (Shah 140, Weekes 67, Langer 63)

YORKSHIRE — First innings 90-2

First Innings Count

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
M P Vaughan c Garring b Tunnell	107	0	18	253	308
P M Hurst c Langer b Johnson	1	0	0	37	38
O S Lehmann c Weekes b Johnson	6	0	1	8	8
A McDermott b Tunnell	15	0	1	40	44
Y R J Blakey run out	65	0	9	157	180
J O Middlebrook b Johnson	0	0	0	3	3
G M Hamilton c Brown b Tunnell	72	0	12	89	94
C E W Silverwood b Johnson	0	0	0	1	1
R D Kemp not out	0	0	0	0	0
Extras (b4 b6 nb3)	42				
Total (113.3 overs)	335				

Fall: 1-41, 2-86, 3-106, 4-114, 5-153, 6-214, 7-215, 8-323, 9-335.

Bowling: C J Bell 19-5-60-0, J P Hovell 17-1-20-0, P C R Tunnell 35-3-10-65-4, R L Johnson 24-8-72-4, P N Weekes 16-4-71-1, J L Langer 1-0-1-0.

MIDDLESEX — Second innings

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
D J Goodchild not out	15	0	2	43	63
J L Langer c Blakey b Hutchinson	9	0	2	10	18
M W Garing not out	19	0	3	37	44
Extras (b4 b5)	48				
Total (for 1, 15 overs)	81				
Fall: 1-10.					

Gloucestershire v Surrey

CHELTENHAM (Day 3 of 4): Gloucestershire (4pts), Surrey (6)

Surrey won toss.

SURREY — First innings 297 (A J Hollake 112; Smith 6-66)

GLoucestershire — First innings 167 (Hewson 52, Bicknell 5-34, Mushtaq 4-6)

SURREY — Second innings 111-5

Second Innings Count

	Runs	6s	4s	Bs	Mins
B C Hollake c Hewson b Walsh	27	0	5	45	50
Saqin Mushtaq c Ball b Walsh	10	0	2	30	41
A Knott not out	4	0	0	16	30
I N Barry bow b Walsh	6	0	0	1	6
M P Bicknell c Russell b Walsh	0	0	0	3	2
A J Tudor bow b Smith	0	0	0	1	1
Extras (b5 nb10)	15				
Total (39.4 overs)	111-5				

Fall (cont): 6-115, 7-124, 8-130, 9-134.

Bowling: C

BY TIM GLOVER
in Hilversum

Rose, relying on sponsors invitations (no problems there, the world and his dog are after him) needs to win £55,000 to secure his card for the European

Rose, who would have won £70,000 at Birkdale had he not been an amateur, was left to rue a drive into the trees at the par-five 12th, one of the few wayward shots of his round. "I was a bit cross with myself there."

"What I've learned," Rose said, "is that the first round is

[illegible]

Nick Price was on the leaderboard following a 65 that contained seven birdies and his putting got better as the round progressed. "What I've tried to do is to hold the putter just off the ground very slightly and it seems to smooth my

nothing seems to perturb the 25-year-old from Workshop. After the Dutch Open he has two weeks off, during which he will "laze about, watch television and tidy the garage".

Larry Barber, from Arizona, who asked for an invitation here after failing to qualify for

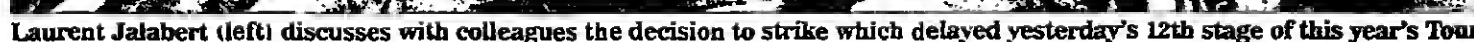


the Open, had a hole in one at the fifth. However, Barber missed the cut although he did not go away empty-handed. He

won a bicycle for his ace. When the organisers told Barber "congratulations on your bike", they meant it in the nicest possible way.

Riders stage sit-down protest

Priem and Andrei Mikhailov, the team doctor, were still being held for questioning



AFB

Davies chases a first in Sweden

"Jack looks uncomfortable even walking," Sigel said. "It is painful to watch him. He played very, very well. In many cases he played better than did. He's a champion, to say the least."

Quick and dangerous route to summit

The ergogenic aids that the Festina team's masseur was allegedly caught red-handed with when his car was searched at a border crossing were human growth hormone (HGH), steroids, amphetamines and erythropoietin (EPO). However, there are many more illegal performance-enhancing drugs that are available to sportsmen such as asthma drugs and cold remedies.

The Tour de France is possibly the most demanding aerobic sporting event in the world. Cyclists race for around six hours a day for 23 days. As can be imagined, this imposes a great physical and mental strain. In physiological terms, the major limiting factor in aerobic sport is the volume of oxygen that can be consumed by the muscles. In simple terms the more oxygen than can be consumed, the faster an athlete can cycle, run, swim, etc.

The second major limiting factor in the Tour or other endurance events is the ability to use stored body fat as an energy source in preference to the limited and useful supply of

While anecdotal evidence abounds that sportsmen have been using ergogenics since the Greeks invented the Olympic Games, recent advances in medical technology have increased athletes' performance. EPO was developed in the late Eighties to help kidney dialysis patients, who suffered from a reduction in the amount of haemoglobin in the blood, limiting the transportation of oxygen around the body. In the sportsman, as the intensity of exercise increases more oxygen is required by the muscles. If oxygen consumption does not increase a by-product of

However, athletes are reported to be using EPO to increase the amount of haemoglobin in the blood. This allows a greater transport of oxygen and increases performance by around 10 per cent. But if too much EPO is used, then the thickness of the blood increases, which could lead to thrombosis. The possible misuse of EPO has been linked to the sudden death of 17 cyclists in the late Eighties. Reputably, EPO is the favourite drug among all endurance athletes.

Human growth hormone was developed for people of

The side effects of HGH include abnormal growth in the hands and feet and excess HGH can lead to heart problems, hypertension and diabetes. Steroids have similar performance-enhancing properties.

Common asthma drugs such as *Clenbuterol*, *Serevent*, and *Ventolin* are abused by athletes. *Clenbuterol* allows

In sport at all levels there are reports that people are using illegal substances, and a recent report in the *Journal of Paediatrics* suggests that two per cent of American 10-year-olds use steroids to enhance performance in school sports. Cycling has its share of drug users, most notably in the 1967 Tour de France when Britain's Tommy Simpson died on the

supervision, which is what the Festina management claim they were trying to achieve when they plunged the Tour into chaos.

■ Richard Stern has recently graduated from the University of Brighton with a first-class honours degree in Sports Science. An experienced racing cyclist, he competed for 14 years both domestically and abroad at all distances.

One shot off the pace and in the clubhouse were John Grace, Billy King, Tom Shaw, Ed Dougherty, Isao Aoki and Brian Barnes.

Or check the website www.fantasyleague.co.uk

WEEKEND REVIEW

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Tom Pilston

Postcards from the hedge

Our fast-disappearing hedgerows are far more than shelters for bees, butterflies and skylarks – they trace the contours of our past

BY TERENCE BLACKER

At the great demonstration, show of strength and general knees-up that was this year's Countryside Rally, a wide variety of concerns was on display. Farmers asserted their right to receive government subsidies. Country sports enthusiasts asserted their right to chase animals. Landowners asserted their right to prevent ramblers roaming across the countryside and disturbing ground-nesting birds breeding for the next shooting season. William Hague and Michael Heseltine, clad in immaculate Jermyn Street country kit, asserted the right of politicians to jump on any bandwagon that happened to be passing.

One overriding principle united this rainbow alliance of rural interests: the right of country-dwellers to look after the countryside themselves without restriction or busybody interference from Westminster. For centuries, they had been custodians of the landscape, and the 77 per cent of the British landscape in agricultural use was still safe

in their hands. Nowhere is the fragility of this argument revealed more starkly than in the fate of our hedgerows, on which a parliamentary working party set up 12 months ago by Michael Meacher, the Minister of the Environment, reported last week. Since 1945, when the Agriculture Act first put a premium on food production – a process accelerated by the Common Agricultural Policy – 150,000 miles of hedgerow have been grubbed up.

A 1994 survey by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology revealed that between 1984 and 1993 almost 110,000 miles had been lost in England and Wales alone. The loss every year between 1990 and 1993 was more than 15,000 miles.

Behind these figures lies a deep ideological divide over the role of the countryside in the past and the future. Traditionally, members of the farming lobby – not so much medium-sized farmers as the vast agribusinesses, for whom land is primarily a site of production – have claimed that much of the environmental and cultural concern at what is being done to the hedgerows is alarmist and sentimental. The landscape is constantly evolving, the argument goes; it makes no more sense to yearn for a lost Arcadia of bees, butterflies, skylarks and cider with Rosie than it does to long for horse-drawn carriages and gas lamps. The parts of the country, notably in East Anglia, where, at this time of the year, thousands of acres of arable land are unbroken by verges, hedgerows or rough land, reveal the

countryside at its cleanest, most efficient and most productive, thanks to advances in farming machinery and biotechnology. Moreover, most of the landscape in the lowland zone of England and Wales is the product of the last 250 years, following the Enclosure Acts.

This last argument, once supported by respectable academics, was definitively disproved in 1974 by a method of dating hedges devised by Dr Max Hooper. The best indicator of a hedgerow's age, he showed, was the number of shrub and tree species: in a 30-yard hedge, each woody species (not including undershrubs such as hrambles or woody climbers such as ivy and clematis) represented roughly 100 years of history. So a study of the

hedgerows of Shropshire showed that a third dated from 1100 to 1350, and another third developed before 1650. In Devon, more than a quarter of hedges were more than 800 years old. Some Anglo-Saxon hedges recorded in the 10th century survive today.

In other words, the hedgerows that over the past 50 years we have been grubbing up at an unprecedented rate in the rush for government-subsidised agricultural growth are the articulation of thousands of years of our history. Some are "assarts", the relics of ancient woodlands, others originated from scrub growth along previously un-hedged boundaries, others were planted as mixed- or single-species hedges delineating property. Over the centuries, trees and woodland have formed an important part of our national sense of self – what Simon Schama described in *Landscape and Memory* as "sylvan patriotism"; today our hedgerows represent continuity, a connection with our past relationship to the land which, like an ancient hedge, cannot, once it has been removed, ever be replaced. In his landmark work *A History*

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Sellafield's future

Sir: Your leading article "A simple solution for Sellafield: shut it down" (23 July), contained much sense. But this was spoiled by some factual inaccuracies, along with an oversimplification of the problem.

Sellafield was established as a nuclear research and development complex in November 1947 with the construction of the plutonium production "piles". What the Queen opened at the site in October 1956 was the successor plutonium production reactors, named Calder Hall, which also produced expensive electricity as a spin-off.

Someone wrote for Her Majesty the following words in her opening ceremony speech: "Future generations will judge us, above all else, by the way in which we will use these limitless opportunities which Providence has given us." No mention whatever was made of the primarily military function of the reactors or Sellafield's role in nuclear weapons generally.

Today Sellafield is a multi-purpose sprawling site with a complicated array of nuclear management functions, including the handling and storage of many different radioactive waste types in solid, liquid and gaseous forms. It is neither sensible nor possible to shut it down. What could and should be assessed is the rationale and consequences of continued reprocessing of spent fuel which gives rise to the vast bulk and array of wastes at the site.

The last Labour Party conference in October passed a resolution calling upon the Government to conduct a review of reprocessing. It is one of the few policy options it has not yet subjected to review, despite the known misgivings of some ministers.

What is undoubtedly true is that Sellafield, far from closing, will provide one of the few industrial sites certain to secure significant employment throughout the next century as it cleans up the radioactive legacy of this one.

Dr DAVID LOWRY

Stoneleigh, Surrey

Sir: Your report "Nuclear fears for 2000 hug" (23 July) states that a serious accident could occur in the nuclear industry because of the "millennium bug".

In fact the British nuclear industry already has in place, and has had for some considerable time, programmes of work to address the issues of Year 2000 preparedness. The work programme includes the thorough systematic investigation, testing and assurance of all process control, safety and business systems. Modifications or replacement of components or systems will be undertaken if found to be necessary. These programmes have also been subject to external review and are reviewed with the industry regulators.

The UK industry recently hosted a conference to promote world-wide best practice and meet the millennium challenge.

RAY HALL

Chairman

British Nuclear Industry Forum

London, SW1

Gay age of consent

Sir: Distasteful though it was for the Lords to interfere with the development of human rights for young gay men, it should be treated as an opportunity by the Government.

The clause relating to the



In the last of our series on Butlin's Somerwest World at Minehead, children and staff meet Noddy. Like all photographs published in *The Independent*, this can be purchased by calling Readers' Photographs on 0171-293 2534 (subject to availability)

John Voss

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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lowering of the age of consent for homosexuals should now be dropped from the Crime and Disorder Bill to allow it to complete its passage during this session of Parliament, and a new piece of legislation introduced at the earliest opportunity to address the fundamental issues of equality and human rights in relation to sexuality, by introducing a common age of consent for all citizens (presumably at the sensible age of 16) and legalising all private sexual activity between consenting citizens.

These two measures would, at a stroke, remove the most obnoxious discriminatory aspects of the current legal mish-mash and provide a consent-focused basis for subsequent more detailed legislation dealing with public aspects of sexuality (pornography, prostitution etc) which could introduce long overdue reforms in how the state seeks to regulate the sexual activities of its citizens.

MICHAEL BRYANT
Carriforth, Lancashire

Sir: Mike Aaronson, the director general of Save the Children (UK), is using a self-defeating argument when he calls upon the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to defend the lowering of the age of consent for homosexuals to 16 (letter, 24 July). One of the chief

reasons given for the lowering of the age of consent is that these 16-year-olds are now adults and therefore able to decide for themselves their sexual lifestyles.

If 16-year-olds are still children then as a society we should seek to protect them from the adult world, a world which in some cases will seek to exploit and use them for selfish reasons.

PETER OULD
London, W5

Sir: Congratulations to Maureen Freely on her article "Joys of modern life: The electric nit-comb" (21 July).

My nine-year-old daughter has had head lice almost constantly for five years. Like Maureen, her fond parents baulked at bombarding her young scalp so regularly with organo-phosphate insecticides. The robocomb has transformed our existence. I too discovered a murderous glee when the lice were caught, tried and fried. You can therefore imagine my delight when I discovered the robocomb also works on kitten fleas!

LOIS LE LION
Portsmouth

how can gay activists therefore claim the decision of the "democratically elected" House of Commons is more representative of the electorate's views than that of the House of Lords?

JEREMY GALL

Asbridge, Somerset

Sir: Once again I open this morning's paper to find it filled with the affairs of a vocal but unrepresentative group. Notorious for their obsession with outé sexual acts, the manner in which they seek to seduce young people into practices and beliefs contrary

to the order of nature, and the fondness of some of them for bizarre and ambiguous forms of dress, they nonetheless seem to have unlimited access to the media and an influence on the political process out of all proportion to their numbers.

I refer of course to the Church of England. Is it not time for legislation to prevent these people from airing their distasteful opinions in public and to force them to confine their peculiar practices behind closed doors?

WILLIAM HALE

Manchester

statement that the Carthusian way of life is the most demanding of all religious vocations, and in suggesting that the Christian parent bringing up three children alone on the fourteenth floor of a high-rise block has perhaps a harder time.

In this she is supported by no less an authority than Augustine Baker (1575-1641) who says that the solitary vocation comes to lay people and religious alike, but that the religious life is the easier path.

(Holy Wisdom 1.3, V.2)

EVE BAKER

Fellowship of Solitaries

Brecon,

Powys

IN BRIEF

Sir: You don't get rid of nits in the bathroom, silly! Spread newspaper over the kitchen table. Offer the victim a small reward (1p) for every louse she hears falling on the newspaper. An ordinary nit comb will do. No screaming. Only silence except for the gratifying sound of the horrid headlice hitting the headlines.

ELIZABETH CARR

Cupar, Fife

Sir: Hannah Ward (letter, 21 July) is quite right to query Paul Valley's

Refugee doctors

Sir: John Eversley (letter, 20 July) is right. There is an untapped pool of refugee and asylum-seeking doctors in the UK.

At this medical school we run a course for doctors wishing to sit the United Examining Board (UEB) examination (the only non-university primary medical qualification in the UK). Between 1995 and 1997, 18 doctors (six of them refugees or asylum-seekers) living here but unable to practise were enabled to do so by passing the UEB examination after an average of nine (range 4-24) months attached to this medical school. All are now practising in the NHS and have career aspirations similar to UK graduates.

The main reason for helping these doctors is a humanitarian one, but any doctor residing in the UK and unable to practise is a wasted resource. The numbers are small but they could make a significant contribution to the 7,000 doctors sought by Frank Dobson - and each one will save him £200,000 by not having to undergo a full medical school course in the UK.

Dr JOHN EASTWOOD

St George's Hospital Medical

School

University of London

Forced marriages

Sir: Your recent highlighting of the plight of British Asian women, mainly Muslims, forced into marriages with strangers seeking residence rights in Britain is to be congratulated.

You rightly draw attention to the splendid work of Asma Jehangir, the lawyer and human rights activist, who is working selflessly and against enormous odds to prevent these and similar abuses (such as the murders of Christians under the blasphemy laws) in Pakistan.

Abdulwahid Hamid of the Muslim Council writes (letter, 23 July) to distance the practice of forced marriage from the teachings of Islam. Nevertheless it is undeniable that those who would enforce such an intolerable fate on their daughters claim their dubious moral authority and in some cases derive practical support from Islam and its clergy.

Asma Jehangir is herself a Muslim and can, and does, outquote any mullah on holy scripture. But that is not enough. The issue will not be decided by reason and logic alone, particularly amidst such ignorance and illiteracy.

When the Muslim community itself takes practical steps to tackle the tradition of intolerance and male domination that has led to widespread and naked denial of civil liberties in parts of the Islamic world, we may then hope to see an improvement in its human rights record. Besides interpreting the Koran, it would perhaps be even more helpful were the Muslim Council of Britain also to give its public backing to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, of which Asma Jehangir is chair.

JOE DOCHERTY

Bath

The writer was director of the British Council in Lahore, Pakistan, 1993-96.

Shopping by car

Sir: The White Paper on transport policy has the potential to undo much of the recent work to encourage growth on British high streets.

I and no doubt many others will react to being charged to enter town centres not by taking the bus or other mass transportation the politicians can dream up, but will simply abandon this sadly declining outlet in favour of out-of-town shopping developments with lower prices, cheap or even free parking, and the need to carry endless bags only a short distance.

The idea of breathing fresh life into the high street by removing the shoppers' cars will ultimately remove the high street - into the pockets of the big business chains.

TONY DAVID HUMPHREYS

Prestatyn, Clwyd

Sir: On the same day as the Government publishes its transport White Paper, the Better Regulation Taskforce recommends that pubs should be allowed to open later (report, 22 July) - but perhaps not considering the transport implications.

Currently, the last bus leaves shortly after the pubs shut at 11. If pub opening hours are extended, local authorities will need to increase their public transport budgets in order to subsidise later buses - the likely alternative being a rise in drink-driving incidents. Later pub opening may be desirable, but it is not costless.

JOHN GRAM

Environment Department

University of York

Continued from page one

of the *Countryside*, published in 1986. Oliver Rackham described the ancient countryside as "the England of hamlets, medieval farms, hollows of the hills, lonely moats and great barns in the clay-lands, pollards and ancient trees, cavernous hollows and many footpaths, fords, irregularly shaped groves with thick hedges colourful with maple, dogwood and spindle - an intricate land of mystery". With its neurotic obsession with hygiene and fear of the natural untidiness of the landscape, large-scale farming stands accused of sanitising the country to death, destroying its chaotic diversity for marginal bottom-line profit.

Ecologically, hedges provide a network of life-supporting arteries for species already threatened by the decline in woodland. Some 500-600 plant species are to be found in them, half of which are classified as hedgerow shrubs, and they provide food for birds with widely differing feeding habits - grass seeds for linnets, hawthorn berries for fieldfares, earthworms for blackbirds, snails for thrushes, mice for owls. According to the latest census by the British Trust for Ornithology, birds dependent on hedges for habitat, food and shelter have suffered a particularly dramatic and accelerating decline in recent years. Between 1971 and 1996 the grey partridge population fell by 78 per cent, that of the reed bunting by 64 per cent, of the corn bunting by 80 per cent, of the tree sparrow by 87 per cent. The future of even such stalwarts of the countryside as the song thrush (down 52 per cent) and the yellowhammer (37 per cent) looks increasingly precarious. Hannah Bartram, of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), points out that government concern at field borders being grubbed out misses an es-

sentential point: that a far more common problem on farmland is neglect. In addition to the 2,300 miles destroyed every year between 1990 and 1993, 13,600 are allowed to become rows of trees, with equally disastrous results for certain species of birds. "A hedge, if it's managed well, is very compact and dense so that birds of prey can't penetrate it, for example. Becoming a line of trees, it becomes an entirely different habitat." And behind the much publicised decline in bird numbers - the loss of what Richard Mabey has called "the harvest of birdsong" - we are losing a wealth of other species of mammals and invertebrates, including butterflies and other insects, which have been part of the countryside for generations.

While developers and road builders are the subject of headline-grabbing protests, it is the farming industrialists, with their subsidies, monoculture and ever more powerful broad-spectrum insecticides, who, environmentalists believe, are inflicting the most lasting damage on the landscape. In his emotional and highly charged polemic *The Killing of the Countryside*, published last year, Graham Harvey draws a bead on farming in the late Nineties. "It is a world of vast fields and regimented crops in rows stretching into the far distance; a world of giant, self-propelled spray machines and featureless landscapes where nothing lives but what is planted." Against this background, government has taken what could politely be described as a gradualist approach. Regularly, during its period in power, the Conservative Party promised action to protect

hedges and, equally regularly, the farming and landowning lobby delayed action. The Hedgerows Regulations of last year introduced new safeguards but were predictably cautious. Under the new legislation, the strict criteria determining what constitutes an "important hedgerow" - that it marks a pre-1850 parish boundary, forms an integral part of a pre-enclosure field system or includes between five and seven species (excluding climbers such as dog rose or honeysuckle) in a 30-metre length - means that four out of five hedges remain unprotected. Unscrupulous landowners have, according to tree officers working for local councils, found loopholes in the legislation, enabling them to modify a hedge carefully so that it falls outside the criteria.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has highlighted the weakness of the new regulations. Such features as Cornish hedges, earth stone banks with gorse tops, Cambridgeshire dikes and significant single-species hedgerows, such as the holly hedges of Arden, in Warwickshire, are unprotected. There's no room for local discretion to preserve hedges of particular importance. Developers will be delighted to know that hedgerows connected to urban and suburban areas fall outside the regulations.

The brief of the working party set up by Michael Meacher shortly after the general election was to look at ways of strengthening the regulations. After a year of deliberation, the committee advanced a series of modest proposals, most notably suggesting that the criteria of importance should be extended and that planning de-

cisions should take into account local considerations. Yet Meacher, consistent with the view that Labour talks eco-friendly while taking little action, has responded to the new report in a manner that would have endeared him to Sir Humphrey: what was needed now, he announced, was further research and field studies. Sensing behind this approach the timid and cautious backtracking of a government seriously alarmed by the Countryside Rally, the CPRE's Elizabeth Young accuses Meacher of stalling for time.

"We were expecting a consultation document and a specific statement on legislation. We're seriously concerned that it could be 18 months or two years before there's legislation. Obviously in that time a lot of hedgerows can be lost."

Hannah Bartram agrees, seeing the decline of hedgerows as symptomatic of the despoliation of the landscape caused by intensive agriculture, the use of bigger machinery, field amalgamation and the widespread deployment of chemicals. "The RSPB is pushing for environmental conditions - public money comes with strings attached. Farmers should have to supply environmental goods as well as agricultural goods."

But, away from the lobby groups and field studies and government committees, are the 1997 regulations and the debate surrounding hedgerows making any difference on the ground? In north Suffolk, which Oliver Rackham saw as being on the borderline of planned and ancient countryside, there is no lack of evidence of the effect of large-scale agriculture - Rackham

cited Ixworth as an area particularly lighted by dehedging - but there are also areas where woodland and hedgerows have been left intact. Stephen Rash, a farmer in his forties whose 950 acres of land near Diss contains seven-and-a-half miles of hedgerow, is a countryside marcher; the chairman of the local branch of the National Farmers Union and, like many countrymen, no friend of the current Government.

Pointing out the financial cost of maintaining a hedge - the labour involved in upkeep, the loss of yield in the borders of the field - Rash argues that attitudes have changed in his generation of farmers. "There was a strong move in the late Sixties, early Seventies to destroy hedges, rationalise fields, but you have to take it in the context of the times - it was all part of the brave new world of the time. Today, I think, the rationalisation has been completed. People have realised that big isn't necessarily good all the time. There's a great deal more public pressure and, at the moment, we are taking a great deal of public money, so the Government and the public have a right to say 'we think you should farm in a certain way'." No sentimentalist, Rash supports the idea of an "environmental audit", a system whereby a farmer changing the use of one area of land should be obliged to compensate in another. It is an idea that is surprisingly close to the RSPB's proposal of subsidies linked to environmental goods.

In nearby Mellis, the environmental writer and campaigner Roger Deakin presents a more jaundiced view. Within half a mile of where he lives, a stretch of an-

cient, hedged green lane, once full of nightingales, has been flattened and ploughed up, he points out. "I think there's no room at all for complacency about hedge-grubbing. You have the ludicrous position that land gained by bulldozing hedges 20 years ago is now earning farmers subsidy as set-aside. There's a strong case for less 'efficiency' on our farms and a return to some of the enlightened neglect of former times. It's a national tragedy that where there was once a dawn chorus there is now dead silence."

On the front line of the battle to preserve local hedgerows, David Mitchell, the trees and landscape officer for mid-Suffolk, has found the new Hedgerows Regulations more effective than he had expected. Helped by the fact, unusually, that 92 per cent of the hedges in his area can be shown by old title maps to pre-date the Enclosure Acts and are, therefore, probably "important", Mitchell has noticed an immediate effect on the expansionist farmers of the area. "I'm getting regular calls from our friends the barley barons. I was contacted by a big farmer the other day about a farm that had been in the same family for four generations and was now for sale. It was patterns of small fields, little hedges. He basically said: 'Can I take the hedges out?' I told him he couldn't - they were all preservable. Well, in that case I shan't be seeing my bank manager. I won't be buying it."

In other words, protection can work. But, for the areas where the vast majority of hedges and field borders fall outside the regulations, and where loopholes are still being exploited, the time for field studies and warm words is past. After 50 years in which much of our heritage, wildlife and quality of life have been grubbed up, it is time for action.

THE INDEPENDENT

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Assassination can never be a tool of foreign policy

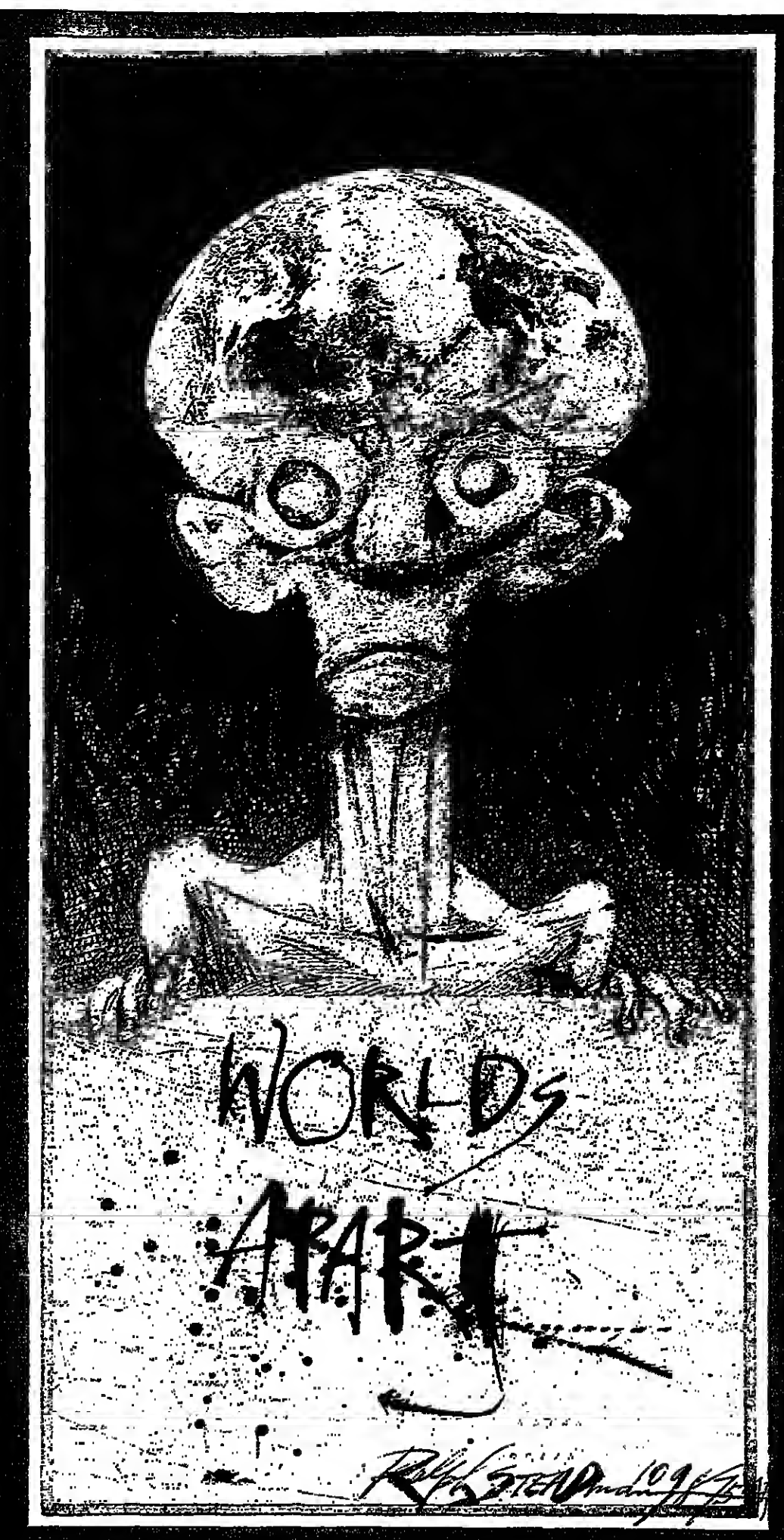
THE ASSASSINATION of individual leaders is always tempting as a supposed solution to intolerable conflict. No wonder the Special Operations Executive planned to kill Hitler, as we discovered this week. The plan raises large, if unanswerable, questions about whether there would have been a net benefit to humankind had such an attempt succeeded. At the time, it was argued perceptively that Hitler made so many strategic blunders that it was better to leave him where he was. Against that, he was a messianic leader with the ability to inspire the Germans to fight. At another level, and with the hindsight of history, hundreds of thousands of lives might have been saved if the war had been brought to an earlier conclusion; but equally, as the author Robert Harris has pointed out, Hitler might have become a heroic martyr, giving German militarism the cause to rise again.

These are not mere hypothetical questions, a parlour game of historical "what ifs". The serious purpose of studying the past is to understand ourselves better, and to shed light on the ethical questions of the present. Assassination as a tool of state policy is an issue for our times, from the flip - Alan Clark's assertion that IRA terrorism could be halted by killing 600 leading activists - to the deadly earnest - the debate in the United States about the wisdom of attempting to kill Saddam Hussein.

There is a big difference between what is legitimate in war and what might be done by third parties in order to try to enforce the obligations of international law. For the Allies in 1944, the only consideration was whether or not putting poison in the Führer's tea would be effective. For the US in 1998, far more stringent tests apply.

For much of the Cold War, both the Americans and the Russians used assassination as an instrument of foreign policy. The Russians bumped off Masaryk of Czechoslovakia after the war; the Americans did for Lumumba of Congo in 1961, Diem of South Vietnam in 1963 and Allende of Chile in 1973 - not to mention the tragicomic attempts to kill Fidel Castro with exploding cigars and poisoned underwear. It was one of the achievements of the much-maligned President Carter to move the CIA's policy to higher moral ground before the Cold War was over.

But there is still an important lesson from 1944, which is that we must be certain of what will follow an assassination, and that this is rarely possible. In the case of Iraq, it is not clear to whom power would pass if Saddam were killed or toppled. In the case of Bosnia, if the Serbian warlords had been executed they would have become martyrs. Now that the Cold War is over and the United Nations is gaining in importance as the arbiter of the new international order, it should be clear that assassination will almost never be justified - even if a prior conviction for genocide or war crimes could be obtained in the new International Criminal Court. There are no short cuts in the war against evil.



But what about a policy for the arts?

AFTER THE new deal for cyclists, the new money for super-teachers and the new expenditure for hospital waiting lists, we have the "new beginning for the arts and cultural life in this country".

No one could blame the Secretary of State for Media, Culture and Sport, Chris Smith, for making the end of the Comprehensive Spending Review yesterday as glossy as possible. Mr Smith has had a miserable year. New money should mean restored friends, or at least some of them.

Nor can it entirely be dismissed as buns for the boys. The £100m for the museums does enable them - or those who wish - to drop all the talk of charging for entry this side of the millennium. It was always ridiculous for a government committed to the educational role of the arts to force the great collections to limit access to those who could pay.

The increase in arts funding of £125m outside the museums also represents a welcome change in mood from the bleak years of the Nineties when every institution experienced a fall in real income.

The real crux of the future, however, lies in the suggestion that the role of the Arts Council and the structure of film financing will be drastically revised. In announcing a new watchdog, and a move to greater regional responsibility, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is also reverting to a far more hands-on approach than its predecessors.

Well and good. Arts funding is in a complete mess. Lottery grants have proved to be a disaster in disguise, raising expectations and pouring money into capital expenditure with no regard to maintenance costs or the encouragement of new talent. Instead of helping arts, it has enabled government, both central and local, to feel that all is taken care of. It is not.

The chance for a new start is there. The addition of money is a help. What the arts still need, however, is love, care and attention from a government that believes that they have something useful to offer. For that you require a Minister for Patronage (for that is what Mr Smith is in reality) who has imagination, a sense of humour and, above all, the ability to appoint the right people to the right job.

Chris Smith, regrettably, has failed on all of these, despite this last hurrah. A new era in the arts requires a new face at the ministry.

Unproductive MPs

WHEN REGINALD Maudling, a former Chancellor of rotund proportions, complained that the British worker produced half as many cars as his German counterpart, it was too much for Dennis Skinner: "And how many could you make, fats?"

The current Chancellor's view that "there is no doubt that productivity is an issue" in the Rover redundancies provokes a different response. While Gordon Brown embodies the work ethic, with no time left for romance, one cannot be so sure about the rest of our MPs.

However, are all-night sittings and guillotined debate followed by 10 weeks of doing nothing in the summer recess really the most efficient way to work? Especially when there is said to be no time to legislate for equal rights for homosexual men. There is no doubt that productivity is an issue here.

The first casualty of television's ratings war is too often the truth

IS THERE any sound more pathetic than that of deputy heads rolling on to boardroom floors? With one ruthless gesture the weak and lowly are dispatched while their powerful bosses escape to fight another day. In corporate-speak they call this "assigning responsibility".

There is, however, a less elegant description: huck-passing. At its root is the basic human desire to shift the blame for mistakes on to the shoulders of somebody else, somebody weaker. The bigger the mistake, the more unedifying the spectacle of huck-passing. When the media spots this kind of behaviour in politicians there are howls for resignations and punishment. Repeatedly, we demand that those at the top should carry the can for the mistakes of underlings, revealing in our ability to shed the blood of the powerful.

But what happens when a big media organisation gets caught out? How willing are we to follow the line of responsibility to its logical conclusion? Not at all that willing, if recent events at the CNN centre in Atlanta are anything to go by. In the past month, three producers at the network have either resigned or been fired because of the so-called "Tulwind scandal", in which a CNN programme claimed that the US had used the nerve gas sarin during the Vietnam war. The gas was developed by the Nazis and kills within seconds. I saw the effects for myself in Japan, when the Aum Shinrikyo cult attacked the Tokyo subway with sarin: a terrible choking death that echoed the horror of the gas chambers.

If it were true that the US had used such a weapon in Vietnam (whatever the horrors inflicted by napalm), then all American criticism of Saddam

Hussein and his chemical weapons programme would be seen as a monstrous exercise in hypocrisy. In other words, this was a story with the highest imaginable stakes. The tale CNN set out to tell was tantalising: a special forces unit dispatched to kill US defectors at a Vietcong camp in neutral Laos, canisters of the deadly nerve gas dumped on to enemy troops, bodies everywhere. Tantalising, but alas, not true.

In every journalistic life there is a moment, perhaps several, when somebody appears offering the Holy Grail, the Big One that will rock the world: vault a young reporter to superstardom, or worse, a dying career. A lot of the time the sources turn out to be false prophets, obsessive cranks whispering tales of conspiracy and intrigue. Occasionally they are genuine. In CNN's case, the key witness was a former lieutenant whose testimony was based on "recovered memory", ie memories that only surfaced years after the original event.

It was the kind of story that even the most junior reporter on a local newspaper might have treated with suspicion. At CNN, the big bosses apparently did not. Through eight months of the investigation and editing of the programme, nobody at the top spotted the danger. Neither did one of the network's top correspondents, Peter Arnett, who fronted the programme and carried out a number of key interviews. When the story began to come under fire from Vietnam veterans and the Pentagon, the network instituted an in-depth examination. The result was the humiliating retraction of the story and the departure of three producers.

But Arnett faced nothing more stringent than a reprimand. Now ask

FERGAL KEANE
In every journalistic life there is a moment when somebody offers the Big One that will rock the world

yourself this question: had the story been true, and had it then gone on to win one of US journalism's glittering prizes, would the CNN boss class and Mr Arnett have stood back and allowed the humble producers to grasp the coveted trophy? Not a chance. They would have galloped to the podium with pride. But now that the flak is flying they are keen to distance themselves.

Arnett has ludicrously claimed that he was there simply to "front" the programme, to give it a certain gravitas. For a man with a long record of courageous truth-telling to spin this line is an insult to our intelligence. Either he believed in the story along with the rest of them or he did not. Whatever the case, his celebrity and clout in CNN protected him.

But perhaps there is something deeper and more insidious here. If Arnett is to be believed, then the proper journalistic role of the correspondent has been downgraded to a frightening degree. Stick a famous face

on to the work of others, and you have guaranteed box-office success. Well, Tulwind has finally proved the stupidity of that logic.

As for the big boss, Rick Kaplan, who oversaw this project, it would appear that he, too, has lived to fight another day. A friend of President Clinton, he was brought over from ABC news to revive the flagging fortunes of CNN's domestic network. Part of the plan was to invest more in heavy-weight journalism, to expand beyond the instant news for which the network became famous during the Gulf war.

There is a core irony in all of this: at a time when many television journalists are obsessed with the dangers of 24-hour news, the biggest television turkey in years was born out of an eight-month investigation and vast resources.

Why did it happen? Was there something beyond the producers' apparent willingness to ignore contrary evidence, something more than a breakdown in command and control in the programme-making process? I believe a large part of the answer is ratings. Like every other television organisation in the West, CNN is engaged in a bitter battle for audiences. Without ratings, a commercial broadcaster ceases to exist, and part of Kaplan's job was to produce programmes that grabbed big audiences. Tulwind, with its shattering exposure of US wartime activity, was just the kind of thing to capture the public imagination. I just cannot believe that the ratings imperative did not cloud the collective journalistic judgement of the CNN team.

Do not read this and go away with the impression that I take pleasure in the discomfort of the opposition. That would be easy to feel, but stupid. I have

genuine respect and affection for CNN. The organisation revolutionised the way television news operates. And it can take credit for its swift apology on Tulwind, whatever the manner in which disciplinary action was subsequently handled. CNN will survive this debacle.

If anything, the Tulwind scandal has come as a vital reminder to all of us about the dangers of chasing ratings. The battle for audiences here in Britain is becoming increasingly tough. So far we have avoided a scandal of the magnitude of Tulwind (the controversial Carlton "non-interview" with Castro was not in quite the same league), but only a fool would be sanguine. As competition gets more intense with the arrival of digital television, the wide boys will multiply. We may be about to face the most sustained assault on standards since the introduction of television nearly 40 years ago.

Conspiracy theories dressed up as investigations, minor scoops inflated into epics, the elevation of trivia at the expense of intelligence - do not believe that it cannot happen here. The Government and the media bosses have their own agendas. Some are genuine about maintaining the distinctiveness of British television journalism, others merely pay lip-service.

It is ultimately a matter of individual journalistic responsibility, a question of what you can live with. The individual reporter and producer will increasingly be faced with demands for the sensational and dramatic. Nothing wrong with that - if the stories are true. But in the ratings war, truth is too often the first casualty. Far from smirking at CNN's embarrassment, we should look to our own work and remember the lesson of Tulwind.

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MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

Transport proposals • Gay age of consent • Lambeth Conference • Paddy Ashdown • Papua New Guinea Tsunami • Bruce Nauman

GAY AGE OF CONSENT

Verdicts on the House of Lords' vote against reducing the age of consent for homosexuals

THE SUN

THE ARGUMENT about whether gay sex should be legal at 16 troubles on. I don't care one way or the other, but the anomalies of age rules in this country fascinate me. A uniformed policeman can confiscate your cigarettes if you're 16, but not your pipe or tobacco pouch. You can't go into a betting shop, have a tattoo or take part in a hypnotism act until you're 18. And - my favourite - you may soon be able to have gay sex at 16, but you won't be able to slice a salami unsupervised in a butcher's shop for two years. (Jane Moore)

THE GUARDIAN

FOR PROGRESSIVES, this is not as clear-cut a dilemma as it looks. All egalitarians are anxious that sexual rights be the same for everyone, straight or gay. Indeed, this newspaper was an early champion of a reduction in the gay age of consent for that reason: anything less is discrimination, plain and simple. The notion of that move toward equality being held up by a body which is itself such a symbol of inequality - the unelected House of Lords - only adds to the dismay at Wednesday's vote.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

ISN'T IT time to reform the composition of the House of Commons? It is strange but true that, in the matter of the age of homosexual consent, the House of Lords has shown a much greater understanding of common-sense feeling than its democratically elected sister. New Labour, whose mental horizons stop at the world of Soho House and Sir Terence Conran's smarter restaurants, may find it hard to comprehend, but most British people do not think it is self-evident that boys should be allowed to sleep with one another when they are 16.

THE EXPRESS

YOU WOULD expect the Prime Minister to declare that this kind of blatant affront to democracy was not to be tolerated. You would expect a

declaration of war from Downing Street. But you would be wrong. Last night all the indications were that Tony Blair has caved in. He has tamely bowed to the will not of his own MPs, but to a bizarre collection of unelected peers. (Peter Osborne)

THE TIMES

THERE HAS been no evidence that legalising homosexual activity at an earlier age has changed young people's sexual orientation. Nor has there been a sudden health crisis. Although the concerns are honestly couched, they should not, ultimately, stand in the way of enshrining equality of the age of consent in law. In our pluralist society, attitudes and beliefs will always differ on this subject. But we believe, on balance, that there is no justification for the statute book to make those distinctions.

DAILY MAIL

WHAT EXQUISITE irony it is that those in an unelected and hereditary Chamber, often derided for being unrepresentative, have shown themselves to be more in tune with the values held by ordinary Britons than their democratically elected counterparts. Were it not for the Lords, this wholly misguided and ill-considered proposal would now be on its way to the statute book. This House has indeed done its duty.

THE MIRROR

IF ONLY we could see straight we would realise that lowering the age of consent to 16 would mean that many young people could openly seek advice and guidance from family, friends and doctors. We'd be protecting them rather than driving them underground, as the House of Lords action surely will. There's sound historical precedent for believing the majority is almost invariably wrong. In the House of Lords on Wednesday it was again. (Miriam Stoppard)

Prescott's on the right track



TOM PILSTON

FINANCIAL TIMES

THE WHITE Paper has set out a clear objective: curbing the increase in motor traffic. Achieving it, however, lies only partly within the Government's sphere of influence. A big change in the habits of the British public will be required. There is scope for optimism in the experiences of some Continental cities. But, as yet, no advanced industrial society has made the wholesale leap to which the White Paper's rhetoric aspires.

NEW STATESMAN

TRANSPORT OUGHT to be precisely the area where a left-of-centre government makes a difference. Just as Margaret Thatcher instinctively favoured the individualistic merits of the car, so a Labour minister should favour the social merits of public transport. The climate could hardly be better: growing environmental concerns, particularly among the young, the public admiration of Swampy and his mates; a London Underground and rail system so unreliable that it must certainly have influenced the enormous pro-Labour swing in the capital's commuter belt last year. That New Labour seems afraid to ride even on as favourable a wind as this is cause for great despair.

TRANSPORT WHITE PAPER

Reactions to John Prescott's plans to reduce society's reliance on the private car

THE ECONOMIST

WHO IS going to tame the motor car? Not "two-Jag Prescott", as the deputy prime minister was described by various tabloid newspapers after he unveiled his transport white paper on July 20. Although the document was widely hailed as the most fundamental shift in transport policy for a generation, it will have only a marginal impact on growth in traffic. The deputy prime minister's determination to roll back the tide of traffic is not in doubt. But until he attracts much greater political support from his colleagues, even his best attempts will be doomed to failure.

DAILY MAIL

I AGREE utterly with John Prescott. I'm 100 per cent behind his campaign to reduce traffic on our roads. I think the nation ought to walk to the shops, use the bus, cycle to work and leave the car in the garage. I just don't want to do it myself. (Lynda Lee Potter)

EVENING STANDARD

THE BLUNT and inescapable fact is that pressuring motorists to use their cars less will be politically unpopular. Is John Prescott prepared to suffer the odium, and will the Prime Minister back him? We won't know for years. In this White Paper, the steel flashes but the blade is soft. The most likely outcome is that nothing much will change before Mr Prescott qualifies for his bus pass.

THE EXPRESS

BUSINESS PARKING spaces should have been hit with an enormous charge and supermarkets should pay for their car park spaces, with the Bill passed on to those who drive to shop in them. White Paper? More like carte blanche to the motorist.

THE SUN

MUCH OF Prescott's transport plan is well intentioned. Clearly, something has to be done to ease our clogged-up roads. But there is no way the Government will turn Britain into a bike-mad nation like China. Not even with bigger bike sheds. Sorry to put a spoke in the wheel.

LAMBETH CONFERENCE

The religious press on the meeting in Canterbury of bishops of the Anglican Communion from across the world

CHURCH TIMES

THE ANGLICAN Church needs a centre which is mature enough to admit to the uncertainties that must exist in every human institution, but not to allow these to detract from the certain heart of the Christian faith. The task is a theological one: to preserve the balance of scripture, tradition and reason, but in a way that does not stifle the voice of the prophet. Authority would lie not in the ability to say no, but in the willingness to say yes.

CATHOLIC HERALD

THE LAMBETH Conference is an important event in the life of the Anglican Communion, our "brothers and sisters in Christ".

Catholic reaction to the debates and conclusions should be neither of uncritical approval of all that seems positive, nor of *schadenfreude*

over what may be divisive in our neighbour's Christian Communion. We join our prayers to theirs and wish them well.

THE TABLET

THE LAMBETH Conference is a great Christian event, whose success believers of every persuasion should hope and pray for. But it will take a great deal of prayerful tolerance to hold all the hits together these next three weeks. And it will require a willingness to make hard choices to leave the Anglican Communion more, not less, united at the end than at the beginning.

BAPTIST TIMES

IT IS inevitable that national media attention will concentrate on the human sexuality issue, which includes such contentious matters as sex

before marriage, homosexuality and the remarriage of divorced people. It is known that a wide spectrum of views, stretching from one extreme to the other, is held by bishops from different parts of the world. They will need our prayers both for their debates and the conclusions they reach.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND NEWSPAPER

THE WESTERN churches need to be led in an effective strategy of evangelisation and mission. The debate on human sexuality, although a secondary concern, must take place at this Lambeth Conference. An Anglican response to the question will not lie in a false *via media* between two perceived extremes of the debate, but instead will lie in a clear commitment to the Bible and tradition.

PADDY ASHDOWN

Comments on the 10th anniversary of Paddy Ashdown's leadership of the Liberal Democrats

THE SPECTATOR

IT ALL looked so promising. Mr Ashdown must have thought that he had been chosen to lead his tribe back to the promised land of government after generations in exile. A year later and all these bright hopes have turned to dust. The price for involvement in the Blairite project was the impossibility of criticising it. Tory disarray gave Mr Ashdown an opportunity to establish the Liberal Democrats as the principal opposition; he could not take it. And as Labour has shifted to the left, so Mr Ashdown's platform and purpose has been eroded. Far from leading his party back to power, Mr Ashdown may be marching his troops into oblivion.

DAILY MAIL

TEN YEARS, 20 years, 30 years: what would be the difference? However long he serves, no one will take poor old Paddy seriously. The very best that he can

hope for is an amused weary tolerance. But this is unlikely to deter him from pressing on with his breathless, cracked-voiced, pop-eyed pursuit of power. (Bruce Anderson)

THE GUARDIAN

IF THE Government loses popularity, the Lib Dems might be tainted by association. Paddy Ashdown's task now is to maintain co-operation, while retaining the Lib Dems' distinctive identity. The way to do that is to keep generating fresh ideas, like last week's call for a constitution for Europe. If he can keep that up, Paddy's next 10 years may even be more fruitful than his first.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

BY COMPARISON with the two newcomers to party leadership, he is the grandfather of the nation. Pants up or pants down, Paddy, we salute you.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA TSUNAMI

Reactions to the terrible devastation caused by the massive tsunami, which followed an underwater earthquake

PAPUA NEW GUINEA POST-COURIER

THE SANDY beaches of Aitape and their high waves have been hailed as Papua New Guinea's "surfer's paradise" attracting international interest. The sea and the beautiful Sissano Lagoon, separated by a 100m-wide sand strip where their villages were situated, were the source of livelihood for the people who lived near Aitape town.

That alluring image changed last Friday night. The local people's best natural asset and mother of blessings became their worst enemy, turning their paradise into watery hell. We can't know what the future holds, or how the locals are going to cope.

A pressing decision remains what to do with them. It's a huge problem - are they going to settle inland, or will they rebuild. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that they still love the sea.

CANBERRA TIMES Australia

THE RESPONSE the Australian people and government have made to the disaster in Papua New Guinea and the stark contrast between the condition of people in the disaster zone and the relative comfort in Australia should put paid to the insular, selfish views of people who begrudge helping people outside Australia. It is an easy, populist thing to appeal to people to shun helping others beyond our shores. Those who have done so should now feel ashamed.

THE JAPAN TIMES

REBUILDING THE devastated villages will be relatively easy. Most of the buildings were simple huts; with money they can be replaced. Money cannot replace the entire generation that was lost to the tsunami. The people of Papua New Guinea need help and

Japan, along with other nations, should spare no effort in giving it. Life will go on, burdened by the tragedy of last Friday. The physical and emotional scars may never heal. It is likely that the people of West Sepik will never again look at the sea - the source of their sustenance and livelihoods - in quite the same way. We have all been reminded of our place in the natural order of things. It is an unsettling message.

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE United States

IN THIS remote corner of the world, some survivors say, the good and evil spirits still struggle with the gospel of the missionaries for the hearts and souls of their tribal people. For generations, they will tell the story of the day when the great wave came, as high as the coconut trees, to give them a warning that their gods must be pacified.

EXHIBITION OF THE WEEK

Bruce Nauman retrospective at the Hayward Gallery

EVENING STANDARD

NAUMAN, SO easily imitated, himself polluted, now pollutes every art school in the land, pollutes the timorous art teacher and the numbed minds of critics and curators, and has done more than any other man to bring about the death of ancestral forms of art, for what he does is a gift to the incompetent and to the shallow mind. If the idiocies of the Britpack are triumphant, Bruce Nauman, master of bedlam, is to blame. (Brian Sewell)

TIME OUT

IT IS one of the ironies of history that, while most of the socially conscious work now seems ludicrously misguided



and self-important, Nauman's self-deprecating absurdities appear deeply serious. His awareness of art's irreverence gives his work a poignant edge. (Sarah Kent)

DAILY TELEGRAPH

ALL AROUND you voices shriek, demand, accuse, wheedle and snarl. Yet I don't want to imply that all this aural and visual sadism is mindless. If you spend time with this work, you discover the deep, irremediable

melancholy beneath its superficial aggression. In Nauman's bleak world, life is empty and repetitive because nothing connects with anything else. We can't see life as a whole until we near its end, when we realise how beautiful it is - and then it's too late. (Richard Dormant)

THE GUARDIAN

SOME GO to galleries and museums for enlightenment and uplift. Some look at art to escape the difficulties of everyday life. Walk into Bruce Nauman's exhibition at the Hayward and what do we find? An art that hectors and rants and raves, an art that intimidates. Instead of exaltation, we're more likely to experience a panic attack. Where has all the beauty gone? (Adrian Searle)

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"I'm against drink-driving and I agree with the court that I should be punished. I find it lamentable." Gerard Depardieu, actor, on being convicted of drink driving in Versailles

"We take a rather wicked pleasure in being unfashionable." Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, speaking on behalf of herself and her husband Leo

"She would rather face a firing squad than a photocall." Martin Bell MP about his new wife Fiona

"Within a measurably short period of time we could be staring down the barrel of Scottish independence." William Hague, Tory leader

"I often feel the urge to slap my guests." Vanessa Feltz, TV presenter

"I've got so much money - more than I'll ever need - that it doesn't matter how much tax I pay." Phil Collins, rock star

DENVER POST United States

A DISPUTE BETWEEN rock climbers and the US Forest Service underscores broader concerns about public lands management. The flap involves rock climbers' safety anchors. Most of the devices leave no trace. But in wilderness areas, the forest service wants to outlaw bolts drilled into rock - an important element that climbers sometimes must use on smooth stone or to anchor descent ropes. Because the bolts are permanent, the forest service says, they violate the ban on permanent human development in wilderness areas. Whatever damage the bolts do is less obvious than the harm caused by other wilderness users who may litter, short-cut trail switchbacks and camp too close to streams and lakes.



LEBANON DAILY STAR

AS A SEX, women appear to have a lesser developed sense of passing the buck than their male counterparts. It certainly will not be easy for them to break in at the highest levels of politics and, given the fact that women have been so neglected and ignored for so long, in truth

there are probably few of them in existence who could anyway be immediately drafted into Lebanon's cabinet as its first female minister with any hope of success.

GULF TIMES Qatar

DUBAI WILL build a five-star prison for its "guests" that will include private televisions, central air-conditioning and computer labs. "The new premises will have double rooms for two to four 'guests'. The rooms will have television sets and central air-conditioners," the head of Dubai Prison, Brigadier Abbas Ali, said. A prison shop will be opened to sell "high quality furniture" made by the inmates to the United Arab Emirates' schools and residents.

All is revealed as modesty turns to mirth

SITTING IN a tapas bar in mixed company the other evening, minding my own business, I suddenly came to one of those understandings of life which the religious call a revelation. What was revealed to me was nothing less than the anguish of being a man; and what followed from it, though not a conversion exactly, was a profound conviction that no woman is worth the love we give them.

We had reached that tetchy stage of dinner in a tapas bar when you realise you have had nothing but half a cocktail sardine and a chickpea to eat, and dark suspicions are beginning to gather as to who hogged the squid. It is always about now that the floor show starts. Don't misunderstand me - I yield to no one in my enthusiasm for flamenco. But all that yelling and

stomping on an empty stomach!

And then there is the fear (if you are a man) that the flamenco dancer is going to brush up against you with her skirt, fall - laughing hoarsely - into your lap and place the Carmen flower of gypsy allurements behind your ear, or click those ivory Andalusian clackers of hers suggestively in your face.

There is cultural confusion here. I grant you: flamenco is not cabaret, and a malagueña is no Las Vegas torch song. But that is part of the anguish of being a man - you know the rules but you can never be dead certain that *they* do.

While we men exchanged apprehensive glances with one another (will it be you or will it be me?), the women at our table yelled and stomped along with the musicians. No empty stomach problems

there, notice. (If you are a woman, you wolf the octopus first and stick your finger down your throat later.) But no shame either - that is my point. No embarrassment. No modesty. None of that excruciating anticipation of humiliation to which the delicate tissue of male self-consciousness is forever subject.

Hard to believe that bashfulness and *pudeur* were once held to be attributes of women. Show me a bashful woman today. When did you last open a newspaper and not read about some sad sack of a Sunday-school teacher reduced by the concupiscence of women to taking his pants off in the local church hall every Friday night to earn the necessary extra shilling? Ask yourself why he needs that extra shilling. So that he can pay for the mother of his children to go out on a Friday night



HOWARD JACOBSON

By the time we were 13 we were on first-name terms with every stripper in the country

and watch some other sad sack of a Sunday-school teacher take his pants off to fund his children's

mother's weekly snatch at the posing-pouch, that's why.

Sounds innocuous, doesn't it, the full Monty? Sounds almost decorous. Just off to cop a full Monty, my sweet. Sounds no more unbecoming than an evening of hings or a George Formby sing-along. You can even tell the kids "Mummy won't be able to read you *Thomas the Tank Engine* tonight, my little sugar plum. She's running an itty bit late for the full Monty."

That's all right, Mummy, have a lovely night. And blow Monty a kiss from Teddy. But who is to tell them the real reason they are going to bed storyless and cuddleless for yet another Friday night - that Mummy is out screaming herself hoarse in the hope of getting a total stranger to poke his dick in her eye?

Yes, yes, I know that men have been frequenting lap-dancing establishments for as long as they have had laps to dance on. When I was 12, I spent an entire year's pocket money on strip joints. My friends the same. By the time we were 13 we were on first-name terms with every stripper in the country. Some of us collected their autographs. Or their tassels.

I myself had the best collection of sequined nipple-pasties in north Manchester. But that was different. We behaved ourselves. We did not grab. We did not resort to lewdness. We sat, red-faced and silent, in the darkness, our mouths full of burning rocks, our shirts stuck with all the flaming secretions of shame to our chests, appalled by our own neediness, disgusted by our natures.

Take a look at any man coming out into the light from a house of sexual extortion. He is always blanched, furtive, guilty. A creature who would make himself invisible if he could, for he knows he is not worthy to be looked upon, least of all by himself. Nothing is more plain to him than that having traded in his virtue, he has forgone his immortal soul. And how do women disport themselves when they leave the scene of their disgrace? With mirth. Always with mirth - unable quite to decide which was the more risible, their own temerity or the sight of the genitals of a man.

Women! They steal your tapas, they uncover your nakedness, and they laugh. Only apes and sparrows have so little sense of sin.

Spurned matriarch of a media empire

SATURDAY PROFILE

ANNA MURDOCH

THAT BRIEF, cooling rush of air through the otherwise boiling canyons of midtown Manhattan early last Wednesday was travelling towards the skyscraper on Sixth Avenue that is the New York base of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. This meteorological oddity, a low pressure zone inside a building, had been caused by a sudden and violent gasp, a collective intake of breath. Anna, Rupert's wife, had done it. She had filed papers in Los Angeles for a divorce from her husband of 31 years.

Sensation is what the folks at News Corp like best; that, preferably mixed with sex and mystery, is what they purvey to the rest of us via television, the silver screen and on the pages of books and newspapers. But this tale, which features none other than the boss and his wife, has confounded them, including those who had thought they were intimate with the couple.

The first shock came last April, when a terse line in the Liz Smith gossip column of Murdoch's own *New York Post* revealed that the pair were separating. It was a stunner because even close friends had thought that the Murdoch marriage was one of rock. But they stayed calm. Anna, they surmised, was firing a shot across her husband's bow. She had failed to persuade him to slow down and devote more of his energies to her; and this was her grand gambit to get his attention at last.

But last week's bulletin from Los Angeles shatters such optimism. In her divorce petition Anna, 53, cited "irreconcilable differences" with the 67-year-old tycoon. There was nothing to suggest that Anna did not mean business. Under California law, she stands to win a half share of the couple's 32 per cent stake in the News Corp media empire, alone worth \$4.5bn. She is, and still remains, a member of News Corp's board of directors. Half the proceeds from all his other assets could be hers too - the

lavish homes in New York, London and Beverly Hills, the mountain retreat in Aspen, as well as cars, a jet and a yacht.

Why, you might ask, the surprise? Doesn't this seem par for the course for our cynical age? Wives spurned in middle age by high-powered husbands who have become bored with them are two a penny, aren't they? For Anna, the script might almost have been written the moment she married Rupert, when she was 23 and he 37. Surely she could see this was no stay-at-home man who would happily trade work shoes for slippers at 65. He was 14 years older than she was and, worse, he already had a track record of break-up. To marry Anna, he had to engineer a divorce from his first wife, Pat Booker.

But no one has ever suggested that Anna does not have her head screwed on. Born in Scotland to a Scottish mother who had a dry-cleaning business, and to an immigrant engineer from Estonia called Jakob Torv, she is considered by friends to be bright, if not brilliant, and even-keeled in all circumstances. In 1964, the family left Scotland for Australia and a doomed venture setting up a picnic park. When her mother walked out of the family, Anna was left to help raise her younger siblings. Blond and beautiful, with high Slavic cheekbones, she finally embarked on a career on journalism. As a cub reporter on the *Sydney Morning Herald*, she decided to seek an interview with the paper's owner, Rupert Murdoch.

There began what had seemed an exemplary and unassailable partnership. Anna, who has often described herself as bossy, was determined from the start to keep Rupert anchored to a traditional home life, whatever the pressures

of his business life. She would even wake their children, Elizabeth, Lachlan and James, at 6am on Mondays, so they could have breakfast with Daddy before he vanished until the following weekend.

Nor did Anna ever allow herself to become completely uninvolved in the building of her husband's empire. Often, especially once all the children were at private schools in New York, she would fly with him on his trips. And in 1990, she took her spot on the News Corp board.

"They understood each other," they spoke the same language, "one London-based News Corp executive and family friend said last week. "and they always seemed loving. Even recently you would see them touching and holding hands. It always looked to me as if there was still real love there - as if they were still having sex, in fact." And never, not even now, has there been even the faintest whiff of infidelity on the part of either of them.

And Anna grew in the marriage. With children at school, she returned to writing, penning two respectably received novels, published by Murdoch's own HarperCollins. Friends say she grew in other ways, too, as she has navigated middle age she had become increasingly conservative in her views, especially in her opposition to abortion. This, in turn, was fuelled by her deepening commitment to Catholicism. She developed her role as a philanthropist, becoming an important benefactor of the Catholic Church in the United States. It was her generosity that impelled the Vatican a few months ago to confer a Papal Knighthood on her husband. What she never did succeed in doing was converting Rupert to her religion. In so far as he is anything, Rupert is Scottish Presbyterian.

Now, of course, it is hindsight time. Nobody but the parties themselves can ever say what really destroys a marriage. Sometimes even they cannot. But that will never stop others from speculating.

Writing in a recent issue of *Punch*, a former hater to the Murdochs in their St James's Place flat in London, details the dismal battle Anna fought daily to detach her husband, if only for the occasional holiday, from his business whirl. Apparently, she rarely succeeded. Holidays she arranged in spots as varied as Venice and the Lake District invariably came to grief with Rupert straining to return to work. Never could she warm Rupert to the cultural distractions she enjoyed.

The hater, Philip Townsend, relates Mr Murdoch's irritation at being dragged off to watch the opera *Carmen*.

"As they drew away in their car," he writes, "Mr M told me cheerily: 'Philip, we're off to see *Camelot*.' Clearly annoyed by the mistake, Anna snapped: 'It's not *Camelot*, Rupert, it's *Carmen*.' 'So what?' he retorted. 'It's all the same to me.'"

Even when at home, he spent most of his time either on the telephone or watching the television. Jetting about and making impossible deals is still simply what he likes doing best. But was it more than that? Did he, in fact, tire of Anna and her self-professed tendency to nag? (Her concern for Rupert's welfare extended to her dictating what he ate while at work to stave off heart disease - lots of carrots, white meat and white wine.)

One old Australian friend says she saw all the signs of an aging wife frantically fighting to retain her husband's interest in her, including in the sex department. So dramatic was the success of one recent dieting regime that some speculated that the pounds shed by Anna, as well as her sudden rediscovery of more youthful female contours, had been achieved by more than just eating less. In other words, that she had



Anna Murdoch stands to win half her husband's assets, under Californian law

Paul Harris/Alpha

undergone the full reconstruction deal, liposuction and plastic surgery included. "Anna was in a dilemma. If she wanted to, she could still look like a sexpot. But deep down, she preferred a more mumsy, matronly look. Because that is the role that she wanted the most - the matriarch of a solid family."

It may, indeed, be true that when she asked Rupert for a separation in April, Anna was calling his bluff. And it may be also the case that

only then did she realise that she had miscalculated. "She possibly thought that she was the only person in the world who could issue Rupert with an ultimatum," commented one News Corp executive in New York. He went on: "But Rupert doesn't go back, he never does."

One theory goes that the request for the separation gave Rupert a sense of liberation. He has not looked better than he does now for years. And the wedding ring has been off

his finger since April. About one thing, however, you will be pressed to find any convincing theories. How do you square Anna's deepening Catholicism and her attachment to traditional values with her filing for divorce this week? "You cannot," the London-based executive said. "I would have paid money to see her refusing to give him a divorce." And so would almost anyone who knows her. Or thinks they know her.

DAVID USBORNE

Bring home a truly British film revolution

SATURDAY ESSAY by MALCOLM BRADBURY

IN THE United States at the moment, it feels like a halcyon season. The Clinton good times, apart from a dangerous dip or two in the Dow-Jones index, just continue to roll. As the millennium slips towards its end, Nineties America feels itself to be more modern, powerful and confident than it has for some long time. The Cold War has surely gone away. So has Vietnam and its long legacy of bitterness.

These are halcyon days for British visitors and travelling cultural commentators too. There was a time when British travellers risked the Atlantic to ponder the perils of democracy, the extremes of capitalism and corporatism, the modern doom of the skyscraper city, the dangers of a society of litigious individuals unhappy to accept federal control.

Today, when Blairite Britain dispatches its emissaries, the news is better. Jonathan Freedland's recent book, *Bring Home the Revolution: How Britain Can Live the American Dream*, owes its topicality to our own present sense of cultural vacuum - that feeling that we are sloughing off some old, tired Britain - class-divided, morally rigid, monarchical, over-deferential, and reaching for some new, republican social identity that even ageing

Marxists no longer seek to the East. Freedland's book makes joyful traffic of an old, well-trodden journey. When Charles Dickens crossed the paradoxical Atlantic in the 1840s, even the youthful radical bridled at the bland social levelling, the Edenic utopianising, the cults of the self and the Almighty Dollar.

Freedland finds something more familiar, more ancient, the libertarian paradise, America now is just what many dreaming 19th-century European radicals and immigrants thought it was (or should be): The Beacon of Freedom, the land of equality, the citadel of the Rights of Person.

It's halcyon days in American popular culture, too. In harder or grainier times, Hollywood produced its fair share of political dramas and critical commentaries, or opened up the world of social pain and conflict. Today, political and social drama is more or less out of the mainstream, and even the Clinton-esque *Primary Colors* did not prove good box office. Post-Vietnam anxiety has been more or less forgotten. The movies, too, have turned toward easy watching.

It is a time of special effects, easy remakes, cultural revisiting. The millennial *Titanic* is raised again, to be lowered at

even greater cost, and with many new special effects. *Godzilla* is stalking the streets and subways once more; and the tie-ins are stalking the supermarkets. High art movies such as *The Wings of the Dove* do still appear and catch their upmarket audiences. But these are not the scripts that create producer joy. The successful live-actor remake of *Scooby-Doo* - the archetypal cartoon that has been watched over the generations across the cornflakes, firmly pointed at the booming, spending child and young-person marketplace - is read as a prime indicator of where the scene is at.

These are the Millennium Domes of modern popular culture: high on cost and new technologies, low on inner content. It is dumbing-down, that key phenomenon of the Nineties, which has American educationists in a state of anxiety, and the elite in guilty disarray.

Or is it a sign of the easy contentment that is the mark of a successful society, yet another sign of these halcyon days?

Of course, this is nothing new. Through good times and bad, Hollywood was always the great American dream fac-



Scooby-Doo - where are you?

tory, the place of easy-going myths and fairy-tale fantasies, and it gladly discovered that American popular fantasy was the ideal dream-stuff for the entire world.

Yet, in the age after political urgency, in the post-ideological season that follows the old War, the politics of popular culture have acquired central place in the shaping of the new society, the globalised, fast communicating, enter-

tainment and style-hungry society that is carrying us into the age to come.

In Britain too, the energies, the materials, the dream-stuff of popular culture have become a prime commodity. Ours is the film, media and music generation; here we will find the core material of our own new Cool Britannia.

Even in the national bastions of Culture and Heritage, the classic is something of an

embarrassment, the word "elite" has become something of a dirty term.

Which means that these are interesting days for the British film industry, now on a roll. For a long period, after the great decline that took it down to a cottage industry, it has survived largely through the support of the television broadcasting companies, above all Channel 4. The money we keep spending on the great gamble of the National Lottery has made the recent difference; lottery funding has already put more than £45m into 54 films.

Now, armed with new, substantial funding from the Treasury Spending Review, announced yesterday, Chris Smith is in the process of restructuring the organisation of the entire support side of the industry, releasing new cash, sponsorship and film financing in association with our growing sector of media independents.

It comes at a time of new confidence: a row of successes like *Bean*, *The Full Monty*, *Sliding Doors* (many, as it turns out, dependent on American finance, or returning profits to American investors), a massive rise in the number of

films in production (128 were released in 1996), a hungry chase for new and original scripts and writers.

The experience of making good television drama has provided an excellent training-ground. Nobody can deny the strength of the home talent in production, writing and acting. What none of these things - the new money, the clear supply of original talent - have done so far is to stabilise a secure national film industry, to provide commercial foundations for certain, continuous production, and win British films wide release and safe access to screens and audiences.

There is another hope invested in the idea of a strong British film industry, the dream we are all anxiously waiting to see. Whenever Hollywood seems less than adventurous or interesting, as it is just now, there has always been a traditional recourse to the international film industry: lower budget, more independent, less pre-formatted, more writer and director-led.

Unfortunately, the experience of film-making beyond Hollywood has not been happy. *The French* invested hugely in their own film industry, and demanded public loyalty for the Francophone product; it has not paid off. The British

industry has largely survived by being Janus-faced. When it cannot make films in Britain, it functions as a satellite, sending its best talent over to L.A. If British films are not in production, it can mount major Hollywood productions in this country, or it could until cheaper, more tax-friendly locations began to multiply.

It would be good to think an enlarged British film industry meant a sudden profusion of good films: films with unusual stories; a social and political edge; themes that touched on a more than sentimental or child-centred view of history; adult and intelligent films. It is what the great British directors, from Ken Loach to John Schlesinger, used to make.

But these are indeed halcyon days. American popular culture is benignly in the ascendant. Whatever product Hollywood opts for, it is safe. It has not just production but distribution advantage. It can budget high and think easy because world distribution is always there.

I have had as much delight from American pop culture as anyone; I would not be without it for the world. But I hope that when, filmically, we bring back the revolution, it will not be to make our own brand of *Scooby-Doo*.

Mark Hampton

MARK HAMPTON was blessed with an intelligence that could have supported any career – university professor, high-court judge, learned critic – and he did exactly what he wanted with it: he became a decorator.

He explained his career choice in the introduction to the first of his two books, *Mark Hampton on Decorating* (1989), a lucid, practical, personal work illustrated with his own wa-

'Interior decoration is seen by many as a frivolous career. Yet to transform the bleak and barren into welcoming places seems to me important and worthwhile'

tercolors and India ink washes.

We all know that interior decoration is seen by many as a frivolous career full of ruffles and flourishes and preposterous fashion statements, yet to transform the bleak and barren into welcoming places where one can live seems to me an important and worthwhile goal in life. Sometimes this transformation can turn the eye, sometimes simply gladden it, but these are not frivolous pursuits.

His second book which, like the first, he illustrated and wrote without a ghost's assistance (this prose was so good there were doubters), was *Legendary Decorators of the Twentieth Century* (1992), edited by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who was also a friend and, informally, a client. Other private clients included Anne Bass, a member of the Texas oil family; Lord Palumbo of

Wallbrook; the philanthropist Brooke Astor; and the bibliophile Carter Burden, whose grand Fifth Avenue library Hampton considered his masterpiece.

Important period buildings were a special interest to Hampton. He was involved in the restoration and decoration of interiors at Blair House, the President's official guest residence in Washington DC; the Oval Office and private reception rooms at the White House for President and Mrs George Bush; the White House Blue Room for the Clintons; the Governor's Mansion in Albany, New York; Gracie Mansion, home of New York City's mayors; the American Academy in Rome; and the private quarters of Ambassador Pamela Harriman at the United States Embassy in Paris – among others.

A native of the Mid-west, Mark Hampton became a quintessential New Yorker. He dined at the best tables of the best restaurants and danced at the most glittering parties. The guests at a typical dinner given by Mark and Duane Hampton, his wife of 34 years, at their Park Avenue apartment or Southampton house might have included a museum director, an art-collecting mogul, the Chief Correspondent of the New York Times, and Princess Margaret.

But Hampton's favourite party was the annual Christmas reception in his apartment for office staff and suppliers – the manager of an upholstery workshop, a master carpenter, a dealer in antique carpets – an event that featured a pianist leading the singing of popular standards and carols. The couple's two grown-up daughters, Kate, an actress, and Alexa, who works in her father's firm, never missed this gathering.

Like three other notable New Yorkers – Cole Porter and the fashion designers Halston and Bill Blass – Hampton was born in Indiana. Plainfield, his home town, had a population of 1,811 in 1940 when he was born to a Quaker couple, a housewife and a farmer who raised grain crops and a few animals and who was also an undertaker.

The senior Hamptons may have

lived in a tiny town, but they collected antiques and shared a passion for houses. In *Mark Hampton on Decorating* he described how the impression a room made on him at the age of seven:

The first professionally decorated room I ever saw was in 1947, in, of all things, a house in the country in Indiana. It was such a shock to me that I sat and pulled the fringe off one of the pillows (probably the first time I ever saw fringe on a pillow, tool and got a spanking the minute we got home... The walls of this room were black green and everything else was white. It sounds too simple for words but it was terrific.

Hampton spoke fondly of the walks and car trips of his childhood, of his parents' running commentary on the aesthetic success or failure of the buildings they passed.

Yet in 1962 on his graduation from DePaul University in Indiana (his junior year was spent at the London School of Economics) they pressed him to enter law school. One miserable year there sent him fleeing to New York University's prestigious Institute of Fine Arts, where he earned a master's degree in art history.

That training, along with a lifetime of avid reading and tireless travelling wherever design landmarks beckoned, made Hampton "a journalist's dream," according to Martin Filler, the New York-based architecture and design critic. "I could ask him about anything. He knew the buildings of Schinkel, the name of an obscure old chintz, the best place in New York to buy English majolica, the provenance of a tycoon's wife's Golconda diamond from the Westminster Abbey bazaar... 'Just don't ask me about baseball,' he once told me when I seemed impressed."

Hampton began his career in the early Sixties as David Hicks's New York associate. His next job was with Parish Hadley, his third with McMillen Inc, also in New York. In 1976 he established his own firm, Mark Hampton Inc, and in 1989 The Mark Hampton Collection for Hickory Chair Company was launched. The line, which he added to each year, consists of tables, chairs, cabinets, and upholstered pieces re-

interpreting his favourite designs of the late 18th and 19th centuries. After an early phase in Hicks's Sixties mode – monochromatic palette, small geometric-pattern fitted carpets, perspex tables – Hampton developed his own sophisticated yet unpretentious version of traditional Anglo-American style with its antique furniture and Oriental rugs, floral chintzes, sponged walls, skirted tables, and collections of botanical or architectural prints. During the English country-house mania of America's booming Eighties, Mark Hampton Inc became one of the United States's leading interior design firms. Hampton was considered a genius at furniture placement, and his art-historical approach was tempered by an emphasis on comfort.

He approvingly quoted Geoffrey Bennison's "Why not be cosy?" As he wrote elegiacally about lamplight:

It seems to me that the act of leaving a lamp lighted on the hall table for those who have not yet returned for the night is rather like the ancients leaving lamps on the altars of their favorite deities. It is a warm, loving gesture and a welcoming sight to the one who is returning. Somehow, leaving a recessed ceiling light on doesn't quite evoke the same cosy feeling.

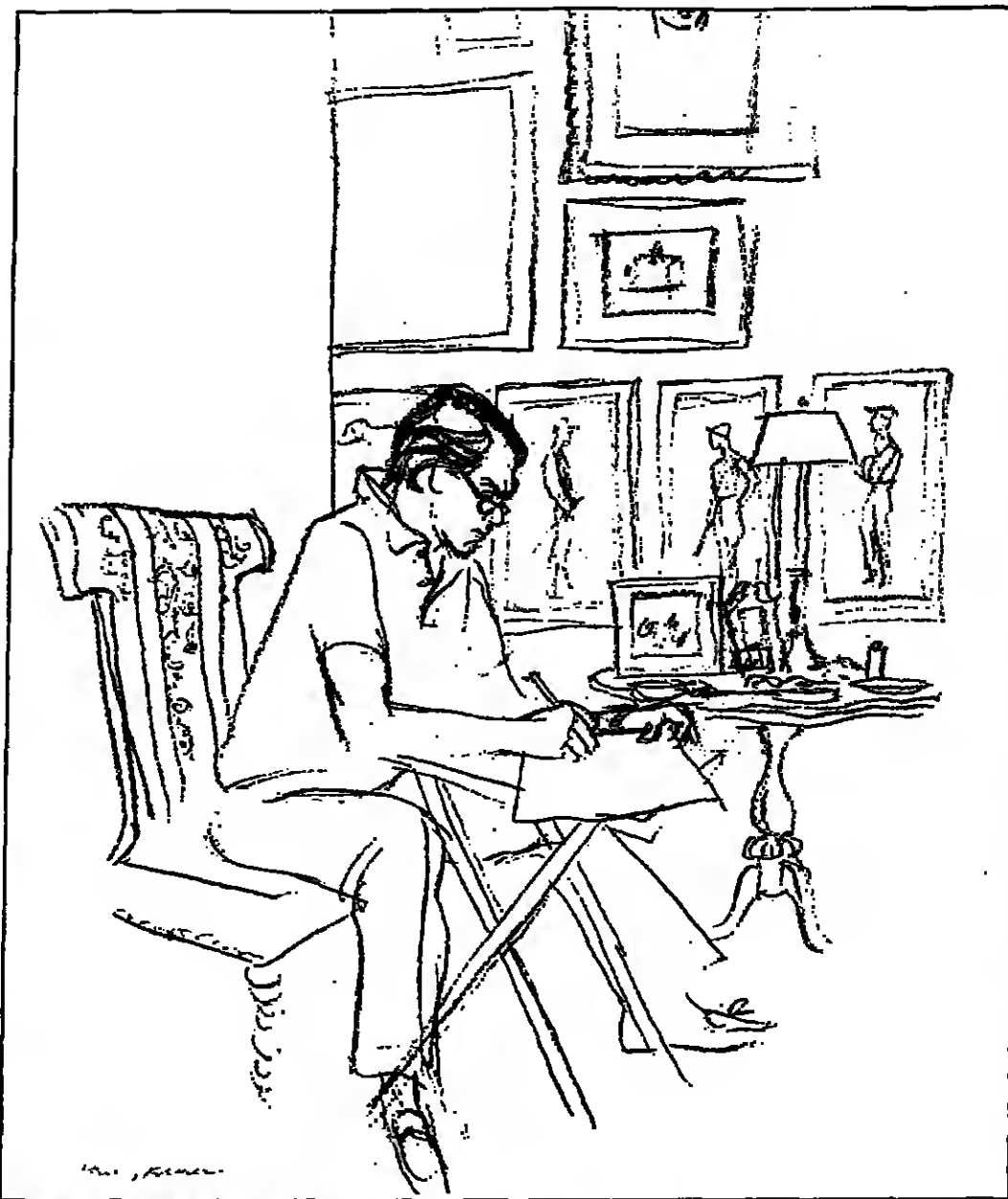
Despite his celebrated wit and intimate knowledge of the lives of the rich and famous, Hampton never indulged in gossip and name-dropping. Louis O. Gropp, the editor-in-chief of *House Beautiful*, a magazine in which Hampton's life-enhancing rooms and essays appeared over

three decades, described the designer as "a warm human being who never forgot his strong Midwestern Quaker roots".

During the last months of Mark Hampton's illness, frequent rumours of his imminent death would spread, but he would endure his round of chemotherapy and soon reappear at the office and at the dinner tables of friends, thinner and paler but mentally as fiercely alive as ever before. Thus his death came as a surprise.

Elaine Greene

Mark Hampton, interior designer, author, and watercolourist; born Indianapolis, Indiana 1 June 1948; president Mark Hampton Inc 1989-98; married 1964 Duane Flegel (two daughters); died New York 23



Drawing of Hampton at work by Henry Koehler

Mufti Ibrahim Halilovic

IBRAHIM HALILOVIC, who had charge of the Muslim community in the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka, witnessed the murder or expulsion of almost his entire community and the annihilation of almost all physical trace of the once-flourishing Muslim life in north-west Bosnia. Repeatedly harassed, arrested and, on at least three occasions threatened with death by the Bosnian Serb authorities, Halilovic survived through all the odds to die of a sudden heart attack.

The Banja Luka authorities refused to allow his burial at the site of his former mosque and his body had to be taken to Sarajevo for burial. The Republika Srpska Ministry of Religion sent its condolences to the Islamic community of Banja Luka on his death, despite Bosnian Serb efforts over the years to destroy that community.

Halilovic was born in a village near Tuzla into an old Bosnian family. He graduated from the Gazi Husrev-beg Islamic school in Sarajevo in June 1967 and was appointed imam of two mosques in Banja Luka.

He became senior imam of the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka in February 1968. In 1986 he gained a degree in Arabic language and literature at Belgrade University. He became mufti of the Bosanska Krajina (the region that includes Banja Luka) in 1988, with supervision over the more than 300 imams in the region.

When the war in Bosnia broke out in 1992, Halilovic and his wife Emina decided to remain in Banja Luka, despite the dangers. During the latter fighting, six local imams were murdered, while nearly 200 were expelled by Bosnian Serb forces. More than 200,000 Bosnian Muslims, over 90 per cent of the Muslim population, were driven from their homes.

All 207 mosques (16 of them in Banja Luka) and 60 other religious buildings in the area were burnt to the ground or blown up by the Bosnian Serbs, many during a frenzy of destruction in 1992. The 16th-century UNESCO-listed Ferhadija mosque where Halilovic served had been located just next to the community centre housing his office.

After its destruction in May 1993, Halilovic could see from his office window what he called the "black hole" where the mosque had once stood and of which no trace remained. A few relics salvaged from the destroyed mosque stood forlornly in the corridor outside his office.

Graveyards and other property belonging to the *vakuf*, or Islamic trust, were confiscated. Members of Banja Luka's committee of the Islamic Community were arrested. Halilovic was forced to hide or to walk around in civilian clothes to avoid being assaulted on the streets.

"The last four years have been years of horror," he declared in 1996. "Muslim Bosnian culture has been murdered without scruples." Despite this orgy of killing and destruction of his community in what he termed a "terrible genocide", Halilovic remained a courteous and gentle man. He was a vocal advocate of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation. He praised a secret network of Serbs who helped save non-Serbs. "There were Serbs who secretly helped the Muslims in attempting to ease the suffering caused by Serb extremists. We are very grateful for that."

Halilovic worked closely with the local Catholic bishop, Franjo Komarica, who also remained in the town throughout the war as his community was likewise decimated. The two made constant appeals to halt the bloodshed and to restore the region's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural identity, something that was anathema to the Bosnian Serb leadership. The reintegration of Bosnia would be possible only "through the return of refugees to their former homes and hearths", Halilovic continuously maintained.

He insisted on the validity of the Muslim tradition that "heaven is built in our world by peace, which is God's most beloved temple," while war brings us only hell. In 1996 the international Catholic peace organisation Pax Christi honoured Halilovic and Komarica with their Peace Award.

"The Muslims of Banja Luka have no civil rights and only a limited right to survive," Halilovic declared at a conference two months ago. The Serbian mayor of Banja Luka, Djordje Umicovic, has refused to allow the rebuilding of mosques, declaring that "the kingdom of darkness must not be allowed to return". The remaining embattled Muslims of Banja Luka have lost their leader and champion.

Felix Corley

Haji Ibrahim Efendi Halilovic, mufti; born Brjuni, Yugoslavia 24 June 1948; Mufti of Banja Luka 1988-98; died Banja Luka, Bosnia 20 July 1998.

Hermann Prey

THE CAREER of Hermann Prey, one of post-war Germany's finest lyric baritones, always stood in the shadow of a singer only four years older who had already appropriated the very repertoire Prey was intending to make his own: Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. For some years the German press even tried to play off the two against each other in an attempt to duplicate the famous Callas-Tebaldi feud.

Prey's career and achievements, however, can very well stand on their own at his vocal peak, no less a conductor than Claudio Abbado chose him as his *Figaro* in *The Barber of Seville*, and his 1986 Bayreuth Beckmesser was widely acknowledged as a milestone in the interpretation of the role. In later years Prey increasingly chose recitals over the operatic stage, becoming one of the few singers genuinely at home in both repertoires.

If he succeeded both as an opera singer and a recitalist, there were more persistent doubts about some of his other endeavours. He zealously embraced television and was not above donning a Tiroler hat and costume jacket, appearing in a multiplicity of popular celebrity shows, some of which he presented himself crowning sentimental pseudo-folk songs while insisting that he was trying to bring classical music to "the masses". For this he received exaggerated adoration and condemnation

in equal measure, though his work in opera and recitals showed little evidence of being "spoiled" by his frequent forays into popular music.

His public image hid a personality constantly plagued by depression, which prevented him from working for part of his career. Later Prey managed to integrate some of these darker emotions in his *Lieder* recitals, such as his *Winterreise* cycle, still preferred by some to Fischer-Dieskau's more celebrated and perhaps more mannered versions.

Hermann Prey was born in Berlin in 1929, the son of a butcher, and began singing as a boy. He studied with two local teachers, Harry Gottschalk and Jaro Prohaska. Following the then usual path of a brief apprenticeship in provincial theatres, his star rose after his 1955 debut in Vienna as *Figaro*, a role that was to remain one of his finest. He rapidly made an international name for himself singing regularly in New York, London, Bayreuth, and Milan, among other cities, his appearances including a series of brilliant performances as *Guglielmo* in *Così fan tutte* in Salzburg during the early Sixties. His home turf, however, was Munich, where he enjoyed some of his greatest triumphs, especially during his now legendary partnership with the tenor Fritz Wunderlich. Wunderlich died tragically early in 1966, leaving Prey feeling, as he said, "like a brother abandoned".

Munich at that time was a centre of the then blossoming German opera, second only to post-war Vienna and its faded vocal riches. Together with Erika Köth, Prey and Wunderlich formed an ensemble starring in operas as different as *The Magic Flute*, *Eugene Onegin* and *The Barber of Seville*, the latter so full of vocal exuberance and inspired comic acting that it became a classic of its time, earning its young protagonists the honorific title *Kammersänger*.

Offstage, a close personal friendship tied him to Wunderlich, whose miraculous stylistic sensibility undoubtedly aided Prey's development. If Prey's highest ambitions may have been thwarted by the, at times, suffocating presence of Fischer-Dieskau, he found it equally impossible to extend his vocal possibilities into another, heavier repertoire, the career move of so many singers during their later performing years.

Much to his frustration Prey's voice, never big, remained light and lyrical with a throaty quality which was once described as "cunningly just this side of sounding strangled" which nonetheless gave Prey his truly distinctive tone. A master of natural, unartificial singing and, at times, highly polished technique and an unusual range, he saw himself as an exponent of a dying tradition of lyrical baritone singing.

Dissatisfied with a repertoire con-

fined to Mozart, Rossini and the lighter Verdi and Wagner roles, Prey increased his concentration on recitals, and added an ambitious recording project intended to give an overview of German songs from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. As a *Lieder* singer, he succeeded in avoiding the schmalz and overemphasis which had once made him a popular favourite with audiences in Germany and which at times marred his interpretation of opera.

In his *Lieder*, he displayed instead restraint, insight and a vocal prowess exceeding that of his long-time rival. His recorded legacy includes everything from the unspeakable to the sublime, testimony to a working life as eclectic and occasionally brilliant as any musician's throughout this century.

Prey who died of a heart attack, had no plans to end his career. His diary was filled with engagements well into 2002. In London, he had appeared for the last time as an opera singer as Beckmesser in 1990, though his recital work at the Wigmore Hall kept him a regular visitor to Britain.

Philipp Blom

Hermann Prey, baritone; born Berlin 11 July 1929; married 1954 Barbara Priok (one son, two daughters); died Kruftling vor München, Germany 23 July 1998.



Prey in *Così fan tutte* at the Royal Opera House, 1979

Professor Alan Stuart



ALAN STUART's brilliant academic career began when he joined the London School of Economics in 1946 as an undergraduate (Sir Claus Moser, just out of the RAF, was his tutor). He became Professor of Statistics in 1966 and Pro-Director of the LSE in 1976-79.

Stuart came from a modest home and was brought up by his widowed mother. He went to the Central Foundation School on the edge of the City of London and thence into the wartime army, where he had a grave accident requiring extensive hospital stays. He was taken on as a research assistant at the LSE in 1949.

Sir Maurice Kendall, the newly appointed Professor of Statistics, had let it be known that he would engage the two best graduates of the year; Stuart was one of these.

An early Kendall/Stuart article, "The Law of Cubic Proportion in British Elections", published in 1950 in the *British Journal of Sociology*, raised great interest. The authors appeared on election-night radio and television programmes in 1955 (an unknown young fellow just new to the BBC, Robin Day, was an assistant producer) and 1959.

Path-breaking work, particularly with Professor James Durbin and with Moser, on random sampling, illustrated the wide spectrum of Stuart's contribution to statistics, and led to consultancies inter alia with Gallup and the British Market Research Bureau. He was also an adviser to British Petroleum and consultant to the third Lord Rothschild.

Stuart was invited to join

Kendall as editor of the reference work *Advanced Theory of Statistics*, first published in 1943 and now in its sixth edition. In time Stuart became solely responsible and augmented it extensively into a three-volume tome. This involved enormous effort and in some respects a lifetime albatross did follow, but the book is a lasting contribution to statistics, a *Gray's Anatomy* of its field.

Stuart was an excellent teacher and cared for and helped undergraduate and graduate students. He had a phenomenal intellect, memory, perspicacity and industry.

Surprisingly, no official honours came his way.

He married Flora Mabb, an LSE librarian, in 1949. She contracted polio in the last major outbreak in

1957 and, after long hospital sojourns, remained gravely physically handicapped, wheelchair-bound. Alan and their two daughters lovingly and effectively cared for her within a full family life. They enjoyed sabbaticals in Nice, 1963/64, and Stanford, California, 1972/73, before her death in 1978. In 1977 Julia Garland, also an LSE librarian, became his second wife.

Stuart had eclectic interests. In his younger days he was a qualified soccer referee and wrote on football for the *Observer* before they published his articles on election statistics. He became an accomplished

cook, baker and gardener and had an impressive understanding of wines. Widely read, an expert on Dickens, he took to the piano in middle age. He had sound judgement

and a fine turn of speech – after a difficult Appointments Committee meeting, he remarked, "A shorter man might weigh more than a taller man."

Alan Stuart was a highly principled, versatile and warm-hearted man whose work will long continue to contribute to statistical theory and knowledge.

Martin Simons

Alan Stuart, statistician; born London 20 September 1922; research assistant, London School of Economics 1949-58; Reader in Statistics 1966-82 (Emeritus), Fellow 1982-98; married 1949 Flora Mabb (died 1973; two daughters), 1977 Julia Garland (one daughter, one son); died 25 June 1998.

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Mufti
Ibrahim
Halilovic

Professor Abdul-Amir Allawi

ABDUL-AMIR Allawi belonged to a generation of Iraqi academics, politicians, professionals and men of letters who still retained the values of a more liberal and tolerant age. It was a generation that provided Iraq with a remarkably open and modern vision and which managed the affairs of a complex and difficult country in a progressive and enlightened manner.

Allawi was born in 1912, into a well-to-do and long-established Baghdad merchant family, originally of the Arab Rabi'a's tribe from south-eastern Iraq. His mother's side included a number of noted religious scholars.

After leaving secondary school in 1928, he joined the Royal College of Medicine in Baghdad, which had opened the previous year. Upon graduation, in 1933, he was selected to complete his studies in England, joining the staff of Great Ormond Street Hospital to specialise in paediatrics. In 1936 he was appointed to the paediatric wing of the Royal Hospital in Baghdad and also developed his own private practice.

By a remarkable coincidence, Hitler's invasion of Austria in 1938 led to the arrival in Baghdad of four Jewish professors of medicine, foremost among whom was Professor Lederer of Vienna University. He was to have a decisive influence on the young Abdul-Amir, appointing him as his assistant whilst allowing him to hone his lecturing skills.

In 1948 he undertook the first of many official tours abroad as a member of Iraq's delegation to the Arab League Conference on Social Affairs in Beirut and then (as head) in Cairo in 1949. In 1949 he was appointed by Royal Decree Professor of Medicine. During the 1940s, Allawi's own practice underwent considerable expansion and he taught an increasing number of students.

Abdul-Amir Allawi was active in the Iraqi intellectual, social and political life. In the social and humanitarian field, he was a life member of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society; he was also founder and later President of the Society for the Care of Children. He sponsored and joined many other philanthropic, educational and artistic activities. In politics, he formed a special connection with the politician Mohammed Fadil Jamali and shared his liberal, progressive vision of democracy and Islam.

When Jamali formed his first cabinet in 1953, he entrusted Allawi with the portfolio of the Ministry of Health. He held this portfolio under three following governments, taking up the portfolio of Communication on one occasion during the royal era until the coup d'état of 14



Allawi on an official visit to a hospital in Ankara in 1955

Under his tenure as Minister of Health, Iraq's health services improved, fuelled partly by the rapidly expanding revenues from oil

July 1958 which toppled the monarchy. Under his tenure, Iraq's health services improved, fuelled partly by the rapidly expanding revenues from oil. In partnership with the World Health Organisation, he launched a successful campaign to eradicate malaria and other fatal diseases. Hospitals were established in nearly all provinces and he oversaw the regulation of the pharmaceutical trade. One of his greatest achievements remains the establishment of a modern milk and dairy

production and distribution industry. The coup d'état of 1958 ended his official career. But owing to his popularity and widely recognised services to medicine, public health and child care, he was spared the ordeal and humiliation that befell leading figures of the "ancien régime" in the kangaroo court of Colonel Mahdawi. Nevertheless, his assets were sequestered and he was subjected to a temporary travel ban. When that was lifted he moved to London and joined the Child Health Institute. In 1961 he returned to Iraq and established his private practice.

In 1980 after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war he moved to London, a city which he had known and liked since his time there as a trainee doctor, appreciating the British character and way of life. Since then he developed close relations with two old friends and colleagues, Abdul Karim Al-Uzri, several times Finance Minister during the royal era in Iraq and the present writer; following Iraqi development and advising unity and co-operation among Iraqis in this country.

Abdul-Amir Allawi was a tolerant and patriotic man, a passionate believer in the rule of law and the dignity of man. His vision for Iraq was one that was

founded on his experience and memory of Iraq's diversity and the fragility of its system if subjected to extremism and dictatorship.

In many ways his last years in London were happy but overshadowed by the unfolding catastrophes befalling Iraq. He enjoyed the deep love and respect of all sections of the Iraqi community in the UK. Above all, his name will remain linked with the issues of public and child health and welfare in the minds of Iraqis at home and abroad.

Throughout his life, Abdul-Amir Allawi remained a firm believer in Islam, proud of his Arab origin with an open mind towards all faiths and nations. Last but not least, he was always assisted and supported by his wife Raifa, daughter of Abdul Hadi Chalabi, a prominent figure during the royal era, whom he married in Baghdad in 1943.

A. G. Dalli

Abdul-Amir Allawi, physician and politician; born Baghdad 25 September 1912; Professor of Paediatrics, Royal College of Medicine, Baghdad 1949-58; Minister of Health, Iraq 1953-58; married 1943 Raifa Abdul Hadi Chalabi (two sons, one daughter); died London 11 July 1998.

POLITICAL NOTES

RORY MACLEAN

Poverty of life in a land betrayed

TEN YEARS ago - on the auspicious eighth day of the eighth month of 1988 - the Burmese people rose up to defy their military government. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in a national strike that paralysed the country. Over the next month and a half the uprising was crushed. Soldiers machine-gunned the crowds, monks were bayoneted, prisoners burnt alive in civic crematoria. More than 5,000 people are estimated to have died.

Last year I returned to Burma, travelling among its modest, generous people. In public my hosts smiled, spoke of pagodas and tried to pay my bus fare. But the moment we were alone every one of them spoke of the poverty of their life and hatred for their government. "This is a brutal repressive regime," I was told. "We have to sacrifice ourselves, or the country will be damned."

Today the situation is even worse. Universities are still shut for fear of student protest. Political prisoners continue to be tortured. In border regions villagers are burnt out of their homes and relocated into concentration camps. Forced labour, rape and extra-judicial killings are a way of life for the ethnic minorities. And the economic deterioration has been accelerated by the Asian crisis and a bitter harvest. According to the IMF, Burma is on the brink of a balance-of-payments crisis. Once Asia's "rice bowl", Burma is now reliant on food aid from the United Nations to fend off famine.

Burma is a betrayed land. It remains under the heel of the same junta - despite a name change or two - that ordered the killings ten years ago. But it is not just the generals who have deceived the Burmese. We do it too, in a way, though our betrayal does not involve machine guns.

One of the legacies of Empire is that many Burmese still consider Britain to have a moral authority. So when a UK company trades with Rangoon or a holiday-maker visits the country in ignorance of whose bare hands have built the road on which his tour bus travels, it is a body blow to the individual Burmese's fragile hope for change.

Aung San Suu Kyi, elected in a landslide in 1990 and still under virtual house arrest, has asked tourists not to come to her country until it is again a democratic nation. She has also questioned the sincerity of our government, which condemns the military regime whilst permitting British companies



Aung San Suu Kyi wants to deter tourists

to do business in Burma. Premier Oil, the UK's largest investor in the country, heads the consortium which plans to build a pipeline from the Yagun gas field to Thailand. Its main partner in the project is no longer Texaco, which withdrew after public and legal pressure in the United States, but the state owned energy company, Myanmar Oil & Gas Enterprise. In a statement recently smuggled out of Rangoon, Aung San Suu Kyi said, "Premier Oil is not only supporting this military government financially, it is also giving it moral support, and it is doing a great disservice to democracy." There have been reports that this year's severe rice shortage could precipitate social unrest in the country, as happened in 1988. If there is another uprising, what bearing will the involvement of companies like Premier - and the French Total - have on its outcome? Does Western investment help to sustain the regime, enabling it to continue to contain dissent? Or does it nourish the growth of a skilled middle class which is independent of the government and courageous enough to demand again an end to the iniquitous rule? Whatever the answer, the Burmese people wish their horrific circumstances to be known, while their unelected leaders want the reality hidden. Those of us able to travel, who choose to visit Burma, must go there with the express intention of bearing witness to the tragedy and suffering of the golden land. Not to do so would be another betrayal.

Rory MacLean's 'Under The Dragon: Travels in a Betrayed Land' is published this week by HarperCollins (£16.99)

GAZETTE

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS

STEINER: On July 20, in Virginia USA, to Amelia Kate (nee Morgan) and Chel Steiner, a daughter (Phoebe Julia).

WOOD: On 9 July, to Greg and Sheehan (Dolan), a son, Ignatius Cimo.

DEATHS

LUCAS: Raymond Seymour BLitt, MA, died on 12 July 1998. Fellow and Tutor in German at Brasenose College, Oxford 1965-1997. A funeral service will be held at Brasenose College Chapel, Oxford on 28 July 1998 at 3pm. Flowers to Brasenose College.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In memoriam) are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, Marriages), which must be submitted in writing, are charged at £10 a line. VAT extra. Always include a daytime telephone number.

The Independent's main switchboard number is 0171-293 2000.

The e-mail address for OBITUARIES is obituaries@independent.co.uk

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

TODAY: The Prince of Wales, President, the Prince's Trust, visits the Holyhead Community Centre, the Captain Jessie Hughes Centre, Kingshead Road, Holyhead, Anglesey, Gwynedd, and later attends the Holyhead Festival; as

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: Mr Gordon Bayley, former president, Institute of Actuaries, 78; Sir Clifford Boulton, former Clerk of the House of Commons, 67; Mr Clive Bradley, chief executive, Publishers' Association, 64; Mr James Butler, sculptor, 67; Sir William Coats, former chairman, Coats Patons, 74; The Hon Lady Goodhart, former Clerk of the House of Commons, 80; Sir Kenneth Macdonald, diplomat, 68; Dr Calum MacLeod, chairman, Britannia Building Society, 68; Mr David Madden, High Commissioner to Cyprus, 52; Mr David Morris, former chairman, Northern Electric, 64; Professor William Niblett, educationist, 92; Sir Derek Palmer, vice-president, Brewers' Society, 79; Professor Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorpe, archaeologist and Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, 61; Mr Brian Robson, former civil servant, 73; The Right Rev Barry Rogerson, Bishop of Bristol, 62; Miss Annie Ross, singer, 68.

TOMORROW: Mr Norman Baker MP 41; Sir Peter Carey, former chairman, Dalgely, 75; The Very Rev Wesley Carr, Dean of Westminster, 57; Mrs Pauline Clare, chief constable, Lancashire, 51; Mr Blake Edwards, film producer and director, 76; Miss Valerie Evans, co-chairman, Women's National Commis-

sion, 68; Miss Susan George, actress, 48; Sir Peter Hall, diplomat, 60; Mr John Howard, prime minister of Australia, 59; Mr Mick Jagger, rock singer, 55; Miss Barbara Jefford, actress, 68; Dr John Kilgour, former medical examiner, DSS, 74; Mr Stanley Kubrick, film producer and director, 70; Mr Danny La Rue, entertainer, 71; Professor James Lovelock, chemist and biologist, 79; Lord Marnoch, Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 60; Dr Brian Mawhinney MP 58; Miss Helen Mirren, actress, 52; Mr Steve Oldham, cricketer, 50; Baroness Oppenheim-Barnes, former government minister, 68; Mr Lance Percival, entertainer, 65; Professor Sir Keith Peters, physician, 60; Sir Frank Price, former chairman, British Waterways, 76; Sir Derek Riches, former diplomat, 86; Mr Jason Richards, actor, 76; Miss Bernice Rubens, novelist, 70; Mr Jeremy Thomas, film producer, 49; Mr Malcolm Wells, former chairman, Charterhouse Japhet, 71; Dr Anne Wright, Vice-Chancellor, Sunderland University, 52.

ANNIVERSARIES

TODAY: Births: Thomas Eakins, sculptor, portrait and figure painter, 1844; Arthur James Balfour, first Earl of Balfour, statesman, 1848; David Belasco, playwright and producer, 1859; Eliza-

beth, Queen of the Belgians, 1878; Walter Brennan, actor, 1894.

Deaths: Flavius Valerius Constantius, Roman emperor, 306; John Emery, painter and actor, 1822; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, poet, 1834; Charles Macintosh, waterproof clothing inventor, 1843.

On this day: Mary I of England was married to Philip of Spain at Winchester, 1554; Louis Bleriot made the first Channel crossing by aircraft, 1909; Mussolini was forced to resign in Italy, 1943; the first test-tube baby was born in Oldham, Lancs, 1978.

Today is the Feast Day of St Christopher, St James the Greater, St Magnus and Saints Thea, Valentina and Paul.

TOMORROW: Births: Sir Richard Wallace, founder of the Wallace Collection, 1818; George Bernard Shaw, playwright, 1856; Carl Gustav Jung, psychologist, 1875; Georg Grosz, expressionist artist, 1893; Aldous Leonard Huxley, novelist, 1894; Robert Rankin, poet, 1885; Paul William Gallico, writer, 1897.

Deaths: Pope Paul II, 1471; Samuel Houston, Texan soldier and president, 1863; Otto I, King of Greece, 1867; George Borrow, writer, 1861; Sir James Augustus Henry Murray, lexicographer, 1915; Sir Edward John Foynter, painter, 1919.

celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Gower Society, at Penrice Castle, Orwisch, Swansea; and attends the Sea Shanty Festival at Swansea Marina, Swansea.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life

Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am; Nijmegen Company Grenadier Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Scots Guards.

LECTURES

TODAY National Gallery: Rachel Barnes, "Snakes (iv). Giordano; Perseus turning Phineas and his Followers to Stone", 12 noon.

Victoria and Albert Museum: Frances Rankine, "A Collector's View: the Chaucery Hare Townsend bequest of 19th-century pieces", 2pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Creative Evolution: art in motion", 1pm. British Museum: Paul Collins, "The Rise and Fall of Assyria", 11.30am; Paul Collins, "Priests and Temples in Mesopotamia", 1.30pm.

TOMORROW Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "The Finished Picture: painters' prospects today", National Portrait Gallery: Paul Webb, "Alastair Sim", 3pm.

God had a reason for inventing the clitoris

I'M BACKING Lord Quirk for his speech on anal intercourse and the African bishop, whoever he was, for comparing homosexuality to sex with animals. One was speaking in public in the House of Lords, the other in private at the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Conference, but both got to the heart of this week's gay debate.

Most of the talk when the House of Lords vetoed the clause in the Government's Crime and Disorder Bill permitting homosexual sex between 16-year-olds was terribly nice. "I only stood up on this issue because I care very much about young people," said Baroness Thatcher sitting next to her friend Baroness Young who spearheaded the revolt at the Lords. Baroness Young who, we were pertinently reminded, herself had a 16-year-old grandson, talked of youngsters getting "caught" in homosexuality. And the Bishop of Winchester warned that once young men have prematurely tried homosexuality "they may find it hard to escape".

We British can, and have, made imperialism sound jolly decent. Now we are trying to do the same with our fear of gays. So, upset as I was to hear that evangelical and African Bishops had formed an alliance refusing even to listen to a presentation by gay men and lesbians at the conference, I at least applauded the candour of the bishop who compared homosexuality to child abuse and bestiality.

Presumably he was not saying that they were as bad as each other - though it has to be said that a surprising number of British people seem to be confused about the difference between gay men and paedophiles - but that he thought all three were analogous in being perversions. And that's exactly what a newspaper is saying when it states, "Homosexuality does not have and was never intended to have equal status (to heterosexuality) in British law." It's what Dr George Carey is saying when he says "unless the proposed law is strengthened, it will fail adequately to protect vulnerable young people." In fact anyone

who does not think there should be an equal age of consent is saying, ever so nicely, that gay men are perverted.

But we can't hide our dislike of homosexuality behind rhetoric about protecting the young. It only begs the question: "protection from what?" and then we're back to that fact that we think that for men to have sex with other men, is, well, sick, though we wouldn't like to say so as such. And that's the signal that an unequal age of consent sends out. It says of gay men, "You're sick." Maybe we think we should be sending that kind of signal to people like Ben Bradshaw MP. Rabbi Li-

between a man and a woman is illegal in England and Wales, whatever the age and agreement between them. The reason why there isn't a campaign to lower the age of consent to 16 for lesbians is because there wasn't a law banning it in the first place. This isn't because as a society we've agreed that lesbianism is morally superior to heterosexuality, even if it does pose less risk of AIDS. No, there's no law against lesbianism because we're so fixed on the idea that "full sex" or "proper sex" or just plain "sex" involves a penis going up an orifice, that we wouldn't even know how to frame legislation around sex between girls.

If we really understood the clitoris, if we seriously appreciated that it has no reproductive function and took on board that most women do not orgasm through intercourse, then we'd ask: What exactly do we mean by sex? Why do the Church and the State make the penis entering the vagina the centre piece of their thinking around sexuality? Why do they focus their understanding of homosexuality around one particular act? Why does sex have to involve something going up another thing? Isn't this sex as defined by men?

These are the questions the Church has to ask. But it won't be able to if it wraps its discussion up in terms like "human sexuality" and "physical relations". The question the bishops need to ask head on is this: What does the clitoris tell us about sexuality and God?

I'm not saying this is the most important issue facing the Anglican communion. I don't even know how you decide what the most important issue is when one bishop thinks it's starvation and another how we can proclaim pre-modern concepts in a post-modern world.

But what is most important is that when they do talk about sex they don't miss the issues by using euphemisms. Bishops, whatever your sexuality, talk about it straight.

Jo Ind is the author of 'Fat is a Spiritual Issue'

Jo Ind is the author of 'Fat is a Spiritual Issue'

FAITH & REASON

JO IND

The Lambeth bishops, in their attitudes to homosexuality, are befuddled by the usual male supposition that all sex must involve penetration.

Jo Ind is the author of 'Fat is a Spiritual Issue'

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Sunday lunch with Iris

These days, for their friends, Iris is an easy guest and table companion. So long as she feels secure, there is nothing to worry about. She starts conversations with a wistful staccato syllables, and fairly vivaciously does not follow what you are saying in reply. Once you have turned the trick of continuing to speak, she rewards you with an oc-

'Iris is as affectionate as she ever was. When conversation gets stilted she responds to a diversionary hug with her broad smile'

Of course, we see Iris rarely. It is different for John. He was forced to reflect on the observation of a woman friend whose husband is an Alzheimer's sufferer, that it is "like being chained to a corpse, isn't it?" John has found some respite in

Though Alzheimer's patients are not normally alert to these issues, "some sufferers do remain con-

For 40 years, he says, they took their marriage for granted. No longer: "Purposefully, persistently, involuntarily, our marriage is now getting somewhere. It is giving us no choice, and I am glad of that."

He reminds me of Nigel, a regular tennis partner when I was 10 or 11 years old, who latched on to the notion that any disputed line call meant the point should be replayed. So, when his shot was

As for Nigel - I haven't clapped eyes on him for almost 30 years, but recently I saw him (or someone with the same name) quoted in a newspaper as a teacher at one of those crammers that help pupils through their GCSEs and A-levels. I couldn't help wondering whether he coached his pupils in how to cheat their way through exams.

"We have customers who have been raided," he adds. "Often they can't afford to challenge the authorities, or they are worried about the reaction of their employers. We felt we had to fight it. Now, a year into all of this, the court has quite properly viewed the material, and has found none of it indecent."

Major Scarlett's defeat of obscenity charges caused red faces at Customs *John Lawrence*

Vindication has turned Major Scarlett into a hero among British naturists, tired of being humiliated by decades of sniggering and bored with the parody of endless *Carry On* comedies. "I visited the Turkish baths the other day in Gloucester, where the naturists meet. A lot of people were absolutely delighted with the outcome of the case," he says.

"There has been a degree of fear among parents about whether it is any longer acceptable to take pictures of naked children. I was speaking to the father of an 18-month-old boy who says that he now feels much more comfortable about taking pictures of him in the bath."

be surprised that folk so obsessed with uniform are into this sort of thing. But I once met a veteran at a naturist camp who wore only his British Legion cap, adorned with the badges of nudist beaches he had visited around the world. "I've had several letters from former colleagues," adds the major with delight. "They say, 'Hey, we're na-

"I generally find that naturist milles are much more at ease with themselves than with textiles - mate that word - let's say, than non-naturists. The boys are more at ease with girls, because nothing is dden. There is none of this eaking behind the bike shed, cause they have seen it all before. ere is no unhealthy curiosity, no eue modesty."

As we chat, I look across Major

"But I wouldn't mind being able to wander the hills around here without having to get dressed. It would be nice just to go down the road and look at the badger setts."

It is an eccentric thought, and a brave one, born of the self-confidence that you find both in the military and among naturalists. Col Scarlett of the Heavy Brigade would surely have recognised his challenging grandson as a kindred spirit.

'We stood alone against the enemy'

EMPIRE BRITANNIA

Ann Treneman on fair play

To the Cavalry and Guards Club, then, for a spot of lunch and a serious exposure to Rule Britannia-type artefacts. The idea is to find out what it is like to be British if you're the kind of Brit that belongs to this kind of club. My host is Miles Hudson, a 73-year-old author, farmer and retired major who is, not incidentally, a rather good sport. "I hope you aren't going to make fun of all this," he says over a pre-lunch sherry. Certainly not, I say. After all, why do the easy thing when it's so much more interesting to do the other?

We are sitting in the Ladies Room. When Miles had suggested I ask for this room at the front desk, I had wondered why I needed to know where the loo was so early on. Then I realised he was merely giving me the facts of club life. The Ladies Room is an extremely floral experience and has the added advantage of having fewer pictures of men in uniform than those parts of the club that women can't reach.

'Remember... you are an Englishman and have consequently won first prize in the lottery of life'

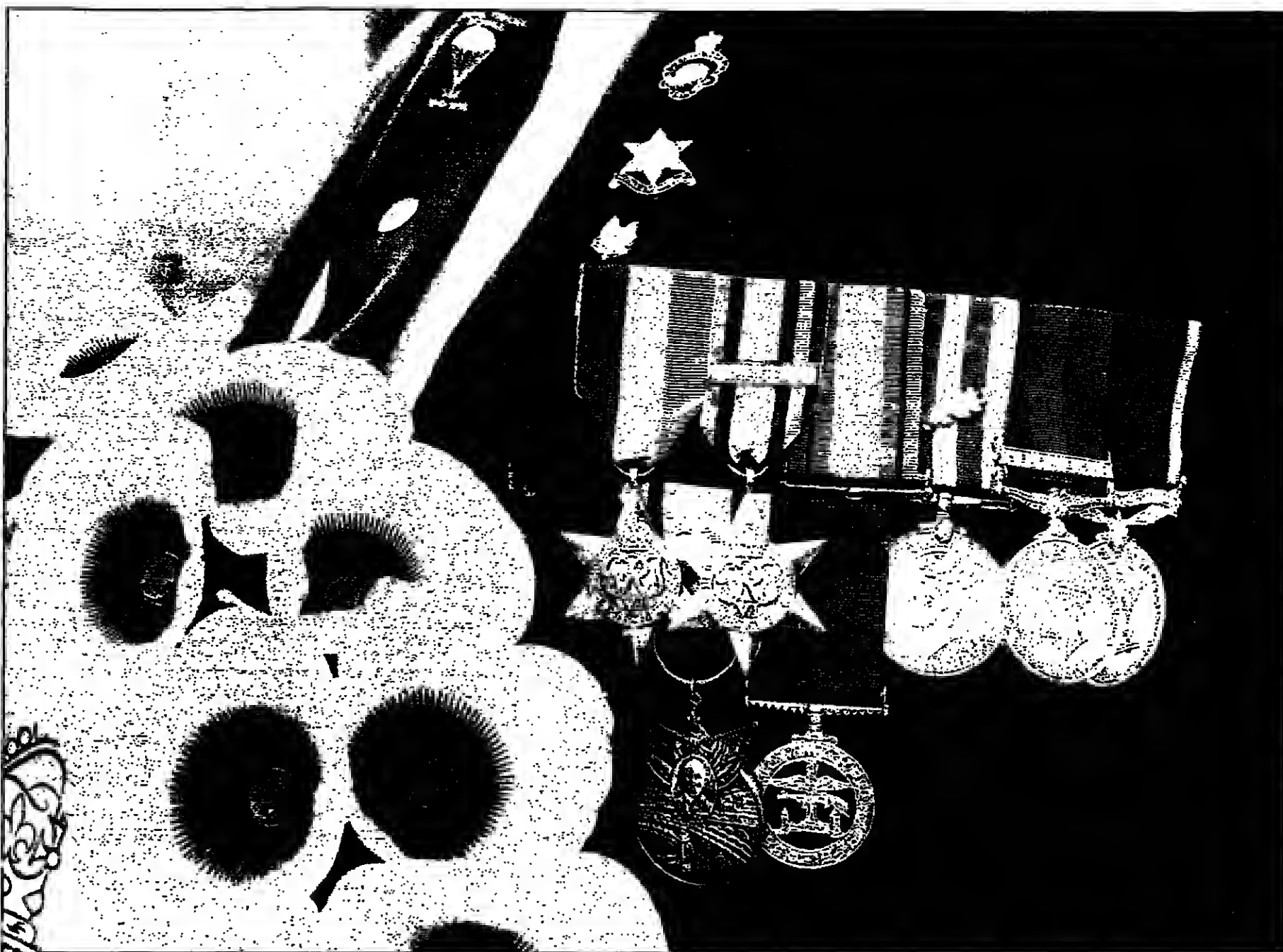
There is still quite a surfeit of the things, not least a beefy one of Wellington covering the entire front and back of the menu. We walk to the dining room past a sweeping staircase. "God, look at all those old men," harrumphs Miles at the paintings. "Can't stand them." But if you were a lady who liked a man in uniform, you'd be in a constant swoon. This kind of place has a bad press in Britain. When I told people about my lunch date, most started pretending to twiddle a handlebar moustache and making barking type noises. "Colonel Blimp I presume," they shouted. I'm sure there must be such characters about, but Miles is not one of them, though he has had a traditional kind of life that hardly exists anymore: public school, army, political career, author and farmer. His idea of what it

means to be British is shaped by the past; by the Empire, by the Second World War, and by his stint as political secretary to Sir Alec Douglas-Home at the Foreign Office. Duty and sacrifice have played a part. He joined the Army in 1943 at the age of 18. During the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day, Miles gave a talk to some schoolchildren about what it was like to be young during the war. "I thought I would play them recordings of Winston Churchill's speeches. Hearing that voice - we will fight them on the beaches - you remember that we really thought that we were going to be invaded," he says. "I had to put the speeches at the end because they always make me cry. I suppose it's all part of my generation's vast pride in being British. We stood alone against the greatest enemy the world has ever known, for a year. I can hardly say it without weeping."

This patriotism is an emotional affair that seems barely contained in the land of the stiff upper lip. So it is a relief to call the Foreign Office and hear real horror in the man from the FO's voice when I ask about what it means to be British. "Feelings?" he asked. "Feelings? Sorry, we're not good on feelings and that kind of thing. It's very difficult to give you a government position on what it means to be British, other than wonderful of course."

Of course. This is something that Adrian Furnham, a professor of psychology at University College London, knows about both from work and from growing up as an expat in Africa. "Young people don't understand their enormous imperial legacy. It was Cecil Rhodes who said 'Remember my boy, that you are an Englishman and have consequently won first prize in the lottery of life.' That's a very good quote and my father said that to me regularly."

So when did he start to wonder if it was true? "Well, I have never wondered," he admits and laughs. "I genuinely think that to be British is a huge advantage in life. You are brought up with tolerant, reasonable, intelligent people with a wonderful history and nothing to be ashamed of. That's not true of many other countries." But, I say, this is not true of Britain either. "What in particular?" he asks. I mumble something about colonial excesses. "Of course there were some of those. Leaving Aden wasn't a very



A Second World War veteran on Remembrance Day. For many, the idea of what it means to be British is shaped by the Empire and the War

Brian Harris

good example. But I think if you took a balance sheet, we were a force for good in the world."

Miles would agree and, in fact, had already done so back at our lunch at the Cavalry Club. "There are great negative sides to it but I think we brought the rule of law, fair play, roads, railways, etc. to these places." What about the negatives? "I suppose the biggest was lack of self-confidence, which still continues. They were bossed about for too long." We talk about the kind of man who made the Empire: "Not very imaginative. Not very intellectual. Brave. Honest. Decent. Arrogant about being British and not particularly ambitious for himself."

This, he says, was an ideal man to go out and run a district the size

of a country. Now such a man might be found anywhere, even behind the wheel of a taxi. Miles thinks he may have found one on his way to our lunch. "The taxi driver who brought me here. He was in the Royal Tank Regiment for 17 years and he went on about how marvellous it was. It was something solid in his life. It is about being proud to be British. I can't put it any other way."

Not far away down Piccadilly is the Naval and Military Club (better known as the In and Out Club after the signs directing traffic). The club secretary is John Stevens and he is wearing naval crowns on his cuffs. In this world gentlemen wear ties and jackets and lighting is supplied via chandeliers. He likes traditions such as Wimbledon, the

Queen's Birthday Parade, Henley, the Queen's Christmas Speech. "They all add up together to making us British." So what does that mean? "The words reasonableness, integrity and honesty come to mind. I'd like to think that they are all part of our make-up. A man's word is his bond." He doesn't think that having a stiff upper lip means a lack of emotion. "There is a time to be brave and there is a time to be emotional. A stiff upper lip is really the opposite of cowardice."

We discuss fair play. He believes it to be a British invention and starts talking about straight bats. Fair play is interesting because it is the only concept that has adapted itself to our new "Cool Britannia" age. Mark Leonard, who wrote the

recent pamphlet on how to repack-age Britain for the think tank Demos, says the traditional British identity was based on five "stories". These were a belief in the Empire; faith in great institutions such as Parliament; seeing Britain as an industrial powerhouse; its status as home of the English language and as the inventor of sport. "But what has happened over the past 50 years is that each of these has become unpicked," he says. "The empire has disappeared, the great institutions are a laughing stock, the English language isn't particularly English anymore. But some of the things hold true for younger people. The idea of fair play lives on in other forms." This, he says, includes the idea that everyone deserves a "fair

go at life" and institutions created to serve this idea range from the NHS to charities.

Back at the Cavalry Club, lunch is drawing to a close with coffee served in the floral abundance of the Ladies Room. Miles Hudson is worried about the way things are going these days. He doesn't like the fact that no one seems to be able to stand on their own two feet any more. "Nothing nasty is ever supposed to happen to anyone. We are becoming completely divorced from life and death. You must never see a corpse now, and milk comes out of a machine and not a cow. It's all becoming rather ersatz, if you see what I mean." And, with that, we walked out of the club and into what passes for the real world.

The crafty Cockney risk-venturer straight out of Defoe

BETTING BRITANNIA

Bookmakers by Laura Thompson

SO AUTHENTICALLY British is the bookmaker that he should, perhaps, be represented in the Millennium Dome, as a camel-coated hologram. Perhaps there could also be a virtual reality Bookmaker Experience, in which you approach the hologram holding out a £20 note. It takes it from you and the money vanishes for ever into cyberspace.

Of course, so authentically British is the bookmaker that he would never show his boat-race anywhere near anything as bogus as the Dome. He may be a stereotype but he is, thank you very much, a real stereotype.

His image is perfectly predictable. Just as you think he will, he wears dogtooth checks and dubious shoes. Just as you think he will, he shouts: "Three to one the four dog!" then changes it to 5-2 when he sees you running towards him. Just as you think he will, he talks the ripe and delicious argot of his trade: "They're very naughty boys, slinging in these non-triers all over the shop, but they'll get their uppingtons."

In fact, standing on his box at the racetrack, his hapless little vole-faced pencil chalking up prices by his side, the bookmaker creates an atmosphere as full-bodied as a pea-soup: a piece of living theatre.

He does it because he loves it - all good bookmakers are showmen, even show-offs - but he also does it because he knows that his public expects it. He knows that we want to see him do his stuff. He knows, too, that we will pay good money for it. After all, trackside punters do not

bet with bookmakers just because it is tax-free. They do it because it is fun and because they, too, can become part of that living theatre. That is why they complain about the ambience at racetracks abroad, where there is only the Tote to bet with, no "Del-boy, the Crafty Cockney" flashing his jewellery and bolting: "9-4 the field." No fun.

So there is no doubt about it: a racetrack without bookmakers is like an eel without jelly. They impart a tang, an edge, an immediacy, because for all that they are acting out a part, they are also making a living, and in one of the trickiest games around. They may be playing at being in the know, but good bookmakers are shrewd: sharper than most of us even dream of being.

And my admiration for them is boundless. Their brains are at work all the time. They are always on the qui vive, always looking out for the bit of information that will put them ahead of the rest, always honing their instincts, always calculating.

They were probably born that way. While the rest of us were being taught that if Peter has half a pound of apples and John has nine ounces, poor Peter has fewer apples, they were learning that if Del Boy lays the winning favourite at 15-8 and Scouser O'Toole has offered only 7-4, poor Del Boy gets stuffed. It is the way they have to be. Getting it wrong could make the difference between a holiday in the Cayman Islands and one on Canvey Island.

People who know little about bookmakers say that they have a licence to print money, but in fact this



Racetrack bookmakers 'impart a tang, an edge, an immediacy... they are making a living in one of the trickiest games around'

is true only of betting shops. My kind of bookmaker is a chancer, a one-man band, not a faceless manager at Ledbrokes plc. I begrudge him nothing if he is clever enough to make a living at his trade: as someone who does, as an amateur, what he does professionally, I know how damn near impossible it is.

My favourite bookmaker, whom I used to see standing at both the dogs and the horses, had an incredible flair which had brought him a vast house in Surrey: equidistant from Sandown, Epsom and Kempton Park racetracks. He was extremely generous ("put your money away!") when buying drinks after racing, though admittedly most of what he

was spending had originally belonged to everyone else.

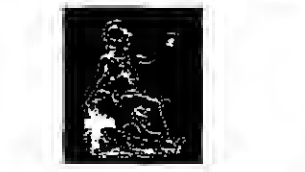
He was, I remember, aghast when I told him that I lived in Notting Hill. "Cor blimey, Laura," he said, his face white with concern against his black leather coat. "What if you want to live in a rough hleedin' ole like that for? You wanna get y' self a place somewhere a bit decent, love."

He lived, to the full, the dream of bourgeois luxury. Yet at the same time he lived from hand to mouth, on his wits, out of his satchel, daring to make or to lose 10 grand a day: a risk-venturer straight out of Defoe, in fact, playing the crafty cockney straight out of Rank films. A real British stereotype, as I say.

Yvonne Symmonds, 60, secretary, Worcester
I THINK THE British are tenacious in the face of opposition, and we are highly two-faced. We are very hypocritical, like all that political sleaze that took a long time to come out. It is wonderful to be part of a country that has civilised half the world and which has gone on for a thousand years without being beaten. I think we should be proud of that. I would sooner die than see this little island taken over by somebody else.

I love the tranquillity of the countryside. There are still huge chunks of the UK that are tranquil, such as places in Yorkshire and South Wales. We have been farming the same way ever since the Domesday Book and I am happy Prince Charles says what he wants about genetic engineering. It shows that we are a democracy. I can think of nothing negative about being British, but the country has got faster and filthier, and as much as I think Prescott is a union man, he has started the ball rolling on controlling the traffic. We are turning into a something-for-nothing society, but that is because we do not have any challenges and everything is done for us.

Timothy Bates, 44, design consultancy director, Surrey
BEING BRITISH means different things to different people. A football hooligan sees his country differently from the liberal middle classes. The class system is still seen as being a classic British idiosyncrasy, but today the class system is less relevant. America and Europe have influenced us as communications have become faster. It is difficult to say how others see us. From a Spanish hotelier's point of view, we are



VOX BRITANNIA

How British are you?

a hunch of lager louts. I don't think there is anything about me that is intrinsically British, although the history of the country has possibly shaped me more than other things. I don't think there is anywhere else in the world



like Britain. Our advertising is some of the best in the world. Our ads reflect the creative world, whereas most of those from around the rest of the world just sell. The subtle sell misses other cultures by miles. It is probably our drinking laws that baffle tourists most when they come to Britain. They are confronted with these antiquated licensing laws which stem from the First World War. Everything shuts down at 11pm and it is out of step with the rest of the world. Drinking is part of our culture but we do not let our children have a glass of wine at the dinner table. We are very staid and Victorian in that respect.

Taylor Scipio, 18, actor, north London
I THINK THAT different cultures see Britain in different lights. The Americans seem to have this stereotype of merry old England, where it is raining and foggy and policemen are on the beat. They have got that condescending view of us because they won their independence from us.

When I was 11, we had to fill in an equal opportunities form which asked what ethnic minority we were. It had categories such as white European, black African, Caribbean and black UK. That was the box I filled in without even thinking about it. My dad is from South America, my mum is English and I was born here. I would never think about myself as anything else.

I think British people are patriotic but we're modestly proud of our country and what the Empire achieved. We're not like the Americans who have flags everywhere. If you saw that in London you would think it was the BNP headquarters.

If a British man does not follow football he is seen as a bit weird. My generation does not have anything to be patriotic about apart from football. We have not lived through a war, unless you count the Gulf war which was more like a video game far away from England.

What I love about Britain is that it is so multi-cultural. So many of my friends are from different places, such as Iran, Germany, the Caribbean, Cyprus and Turkey. This generation is one of the most accepting of different cultures. Nobody questions it and we all get along.

INTERVIEWS BY
CAYTE WILLIAMS

Laughing all the way to a prime-time deal

LAST YEAR at the Montreal Comedy Festival, known as Just For Laughs, a group of up-and-coming American stand-ups got stuck in a lift at three in the morning at the Delta Hotel, the festival headquarters. One comedian whipped out her mobile phone and was straight on to her publicist: "Look, Donny," she shrieked, "I'm stuck in a lift. Put out a press release about it. I need to get noticed." At Just For Laughs, hype never sleeps.

The world's largest comedy festival is also the world's largest schmooze. LA's finest - agents, network TV execs, film moguls, publicists, lawyers (to say nothing of shrinkers and cosmetic surgeons) - decamp to Montreal for two weeks

Heard the one about the Montreal Comedy Festival?
The punchline is pure schmooze. By James Rampton

and indulge in a feeding frenzy on the 500-odd performers who have been specially invited from as far afield as South Korea, Russia and New Zealand. There are more sharks circling here than in *Jaws*.

The US "Comedy-ratti" get their first scent of blood at the showcase performances where each comedian is allotted just five minutes to sell his or her (more usually his) wares. Last year, there was reportedly a sign on the back of the dressing room door that read: "Go

out, have fun and get yourself a deal." Tell it like it is.

"When I first watched one of the showcases, the whole thing shook me to the core," says James Herring from Avalon, the company that manages, among others, David Badiel, Frank Skinner, Stewart Lee and Richard Herring (no relation).

"Before Stewart had left the stage last year, someone put a business card in my hand which said: 'From your very good friends at the Fox Network'. At his second gig, a bloke from Disney chased him down the street." Lee did get a development deal out of it, though.

After the showcases, everyone repairs to the bar at the Delta which, from midnight to 4am every night, is Schmooze Central. Through a haze of cigar smoke and hand-drawn fumes, snippets drift over from neighbouring tables as television producers ostentatiously wearing VIP laminates sink their teeth into the comic prey - "I've been excited about your work for so-o-o long... the network would just love to make a pilot with you." Watching this performance is a lot more entertaining than some of the comedians' acts.

It is also quite an eye-opener. Noel Fielding, a 25-year-old British stand-up at his first Just For Laughs, compares the bar at the Delta to *Dante's Inferno*: "The objective is to get through several different layers to the middle, where there is a huge agent sucking comedians in like a black hole."

LA wheeler-dealers have been known to ask British managers: "Have you got a piece of talent to fill this slot?"

"The festival is structured as a comedy supermarket," says James Herring, "so network executives

can take off the shelf neatly packaged shows they can turn into long-running series that will make them all very rich."

"It's a trade fair, but a fantastic trade fair," says Lee who, not content with wowing moguls by night, is by day making a TV series about Just For Laughs for the Paramount Comedy Channel.

"If you see the American comedians here, they're trying so hard they're all eyes and teeth. It's not a festival in the way British people would understand it. It's purely about being discovered."

"Comedians come here to advance their careers by any means necessary - and I'd include myself in that," he adds hastily.

"People can't afford to take risks," Lee continues. "Some performers here promote a version of themselves they imagine will do well in a sitcom. They're all one note. They think that makes them more easily digestible commodities for the networks. Tim Allen did a stand-up set for 10 years, the catchphrase of which was 'I got it at Sears'. All the material was about DIY. He got seen here and ended up doing *Home Improvement*, a US sitcom about DIY."

Lee is not alone in his slightly jaded view of the Olympic-class schmoozing at Just For Laughs (which runs until tomorrow, if you happen to be in the area).

According to Sean Meo, a young British comedian enjoying his first Just For Laughs:

"You get the impression that every single stand-up here would kill their granny to get a prime-time show. The problem is, the networks are looking for something they can sell to Joe Schmoe who lives in a caravan in Alabama. They're not looking for startling originality. They're

trying to sell advertising space."

Still, the hard-sell approach has evidently worked over the last 16 years. The list of Just For Laughs alumni who have gone on to be huge reads like a Comedy Hall of Fame: Roseanne, Jerry Seinfeld, Jim Carrey, Kelsey Grammer, David Hyde Pierce, Rowan Atkinson, Ben Elton, Frank Skinner, Lenny Henry, Harry Enfield, Jack Dee and Eddie Izzard all performed there.

Comedians surrounded this year by a buzz louder than a wasps-nest include the British quartet of Lee and Herring, and two former Perrier Award winners, Lee Evans and Dylan Moran. Of the 25-odd comedians I have seen this week, Lee and Herring cracked the best gag.

Herring: I hate the French.

Lee: You can't say that in French Canada.

Herring: Sorry. Je déteste les Français.

Over two weeks, Just For Laughs certainly offers a smorgasbord of comedy for audiences to gorge themselves on. The festival completely takes over the city. Just For Laughs banners are hung over many streets, and three blocks of the Latin Quarter are closed off every evening for general street-performing tomfoolery. In excess of 700,000 people, more than a third of Montreal's population, will attend some part of the festival, and they feel passionately about it. One night I found myself in a heated debate with a taxi driver over whether Lee's material about Diana, Princess of Wales was tasteless.

Life in the festival hubbly is hugely enjoyable - unless you happen to be the stand-up who thought one night that he was getting on rather well in Schmooze Central with a very attractive female comedian. It was all going swimmingly until he tried to give her his phone number.

"Look, hnddy," she told him firmly, "I'm after a deal, not a date."



Stewart Lee: It's a trade fair, but a fantastic trade fair



Dylan Moran is one of four sought-after British comics

Cuban company's rough magic fails to cast its spell

TOWARDS THE end of this Cuban reworking of *The Tempest*, Macbeth and his spouse are seen greedily tucking into the corpse of Miranda, an intertextual plot twist Shakespeare must be kicking himself for not having thought of first.

You think I am making it up? Believe me, by that stage of the evening, if Richard III had limped on in lascivious pursuit of a Yoruban spirit that had disguised itself as Juliet's Nurse, I would not have turned a hair.

The Tempest is a play that has always attracted bizarre adapt-

THEATRE
OTRA TEMPESTAD
THE GLOBE, LONDON

ations, from the early Dryden/Davenant version which tricked it out with tidy-minded symmetries (the woman who has never seen a man meets her match in the man who has never seen a woman, etc) to *Forbidden Planet*, its transfer into outer space. There is no one drier, though, than Teatro Buendia's *Otra Tempestad* (now visiting the Globe

in London) which swells the population of Prospero's Island with assorted refugees from the rest of the Shakespeare canon and which attempts to imbue the original with aspects of Afro-Caribbean myth and performance technique.

The result often reminds you of a Reduced Shakespeare Company sketch that has been stretched to 100 minutes and equipped with exotic costumes and masks. The serene cheek of it can, admittedly, be endearing. I laughed out loud when the wedding of Miranda and Othello

was interrupted by no less definitive a party-pooper than Shylock waving a scroll and demanding his pound of flesh. And from the moment at the start when we see Hamlet fondling the bare breast of one of the Globe's integral statues, it is evident that the company are not going to be inhibited by the venue. If their vocabulary of movement is a little hackneyed and the stage pictures they create (the swaying poles for the storm, the use of knives as crutches to evoke dogged violence, the red silk billowing from the balcony to symbolise

blood, etc) are scarcely shocking in their novelty, the actors perform the piece with utter self-conviction.

What the show is trying to say became steadily less clear as the evening wore on. Any parallels between Cuba and Prospero's Island (in respect of heeded dictators coming to the end of their rule) are not highlighted and, indeed, the power structure on the island is more than a tad confusing. A trio of trickys - and topless - Yoruban deities, the daughters of Sycorax, not only compete with Prospero but

have the handy knack of changing shape and assuming the guise of such Shakespearean heroines as Lady Macbeth, Desdemona and Ophelia. One of these goddesses casts a spell over Miranda that will make her (shades of Titania) fall in love with the next creature that she sees. Hence the passion for Caliban that turns Prospero from visionary to wrathful tyrant.

The deities and Ariel are beguiling performed, with lots of weird, high-pitched squawks and squeaks as though emanating from some

extraterrestrial aviary. But there can be too much fluidity in a myth to create arresting drama. If you feel that anything may happen, the impact of what does occur is devalued. And instead of coming across as potent, recurring archetypes, the characters from the rest of the Shakespeare canon are reduced by this show to crude simplification. When Prospero administers his rough magic, "rough" here is very much the operative word.

To Sun (Booking: 0171-401 9919)

PAUL TAYLOR

You can't hurry jazz

IT'S CURIOUS how rock musicians tends to treat jazz the way jazz musicians treat golf. It's something they spend their money on after they've reached a certain level of wealth or reputation. It gives them something to focus on. It gets them out of the house. For a member of the rhythm section, it's not as difficult to fake as a McCartneyesque night of baton pointing at the Royal Albert Hall, but it brings with it a comparable air of seriousness and old man dignity, when things are getting a bit ridiculous on the rock stage. But their handicap tends to be that they can't play jazz.

Phil Collins' Big Band playing as part of the South Bank's Rhythm Sticks festival was the real deal, though, composed from two of those American working groups that combine anonymity with phenomenal virtuosity, and demonstrates what it means to be a jazz musician in the States. He brought with him two "names",

RHYTHM STICKS
PHIL COLLINS' BIG BAND
ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
LONDON

as well. Vocalist Oleta Adams is the popular soul-slanted jazz singer, and Gerald Albright an exciting saxophonist who has played in some distinguished company across the Channel.

Albright looked a bit like Johnny Hodges, sounded a bit like David Sanborn, and came on like a showman - living up an MOR repertoire of largely Collins and Genesis originals with a series of high-note spectaculars.

The conversion from rock drummer - no matter how accomplished - to jazz isn't a comfortable one. The attributes of a good rock player - power, precision, a kit as big as a shed - have little to do with the vagaries of swing. In jazz, you don't want too much precision: you want to leave that tiny, almost imperceptible



Collins: almost as popular as the Filofax

lag between cymbal and bassist that gives jazz its unique drive. And the best jazz drummers are a constant source of inspiration for the soloists, scattering different rhythms across the snares and toms like pebbles.

It's true that Collins played fusion during the Seventies, with a band called Brand X, but fusion unites rock rhythms with jazz progressions and solos,

so was hardly a school for this. Collins seemed to swing best mixing it on mid-tempos with Louis Conte's congas. In power and explosiveness, he lacked nothing, firing rounds of incendiary riffs and accents like his hero Buddy Rich. In any case, he was always more interested in showcasing the band than proving any serious jazz credentials himself.

Next to the American band, he seemed even more British, announcing the players in faux-Vaudeville Cockney: "Mr Albright and that saxophone of his."

Shuffling out, there were more old men with ponytails than the Royal Festival Hall is probably used to - but playing jazz, classical music or punk, Collins will always remain the favourite of those Filofax and Miami Vice-raised fans of Quality Rock.

LINTON CHISWICK
This review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper

GALLERY WEEK
KINGSLEY CRAFT WORKSHOP
BRAHM GALLERY, LEEDS

WHEN THE pits were shut down, the people of Kingsley, a small mining village in West Yorkshire, found their lives thrown into turmoil. But in the void which followed the Kingsley Craft Workshop took hold, set up by a group of redundant miners, their wives and friends.

This weekend, at the Brahm Gallery in Leeds, the workshop holds its first exhibition, consisting of a wide selection of watercolours, pen drawings, découpage and collage.

The exhibition is called *Peoples' Art*, a direct challenge

to the notion of high art and the implication that everything that does not fall into the category of high art is second rate and not to be taken seriously.

Three derelict and vandalised terraced houses were handed over to the group who, with the help of £19,000 provided by Wakefield Council, worked flat out to restore the buildings and transform them

into a space designed to meet their needs.

The group's drop-in centre, which opened in 1990, is rightly considered a success story. It provides a focus for the community, nurtures creativity and holds a number of classes ranging from woodwork to photography and pottery.

Lenny Watson, a former miner who began painting 15

months ago, says he loves his new pastime: "I started painting for pleasure, to learn barge painting, and ended up splashing this watery stuff about. It's great fun."

The artists say they would like the public to take a look at their work and to "enjoy it for what it is, not what it is termed as". Remember high art is in the eye of the beholder.

Peoples' Art, Brahm Gallery, 9a Alma Road, Headingley, Leeds (0113-230 4000)

KATE MIKHAIL

CLASSIC CARTOONS
MARTIN PLIMMER ON
COMPUTER BORES THEN AND NOW



"We bought this game for Rex, really. He loves to chase the ball."

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY is a gift to the cartoonist for its continuing novelty value and its potential power to affect life for good or bad. For cynics such as Honeysett, who revealed a contradiction inherent in video games in this cartoon of the early Eighties, it reduces us, making life less vivid. We laugh because its characters are so depressing. It is possible to imagine an optimist

such as Larry drawing the same cartoon, but making us triumph in his characters' ingenuity, however crass its expression. The same joke, reworked for the Internet age, appears in *Revenge of the Latchkey Kids* (Workman Publishing, 1998), by another cynic, American Ted Ball, a cartoonist for whom the gloomiest scenarios provide the brightest creative inspiration.



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ON SUNDAY



Jimmy Pursey may now be a part-time model. But he'll always be a full-time punk. By Matthew Rowan

Still hard up after all these years

Jimmy Pursey is a punk rocker. He has been since 1975, and that is still all he wants to be: it is his life-time's work. However, the lead singer of Sham 69 - the band most famous for such late-Seventies street anthems as "Borstal Breakout", "If the Kids are United", "Hurry up Harry" and "Angels with Dirty Faces" - keeps on going to places you would not think he would go to.

Such as a bus in Bushey Park, on the outskirts of west London, where he has joined up with the E-team - the travelling band of eco-warriors who defied the bulldozers at sites such as Twyford Down and Newbury - to fight the proposed redevelopment of six acres of disused land.

Or a TV advert for Campari. The aperitif is trying to rebrand itself as a drink the most hardened men can aspire to be seen with, so Pursey plays a cat burglar, the extras include "Mad" Frankie Fraser, and the whole thing is set to the theme music of *Get Carter*.

Or the catwalk. Over the years he has modelled for Katharine Hamnett, Alexander McQueen, The Gap, Comme des Garçons and, most recently, Diesel. It has aroused plenty of curiosity: isn't that Jimmy Pursey? How come he is modelling clothes? And all the time, he feels, there is a tacit suspicion that he has sold out.

He is used to loose criticism. Partly because of "Hurry up Harry", he has been portrayed as a lager lout, but the man who sang "we're going down the pub" does not even drink. "People ring me up and say

'do you want to wear a pair of jeans and get paid two grand?' And I say 'yes, thank you' because I get paid no money for what I do.'

What he does do is punk rock. Sham 69 are still doing gigs and writing songs about street life and broken lives because those issues have not gone away. There has never been much money in it, but any sign of wealth is proof of a cop-out if you are seen as a rebel. At the height of Pursey's fame in the late Seventies, he bought a place in the country. This was described in the music press as a sprawling estate, when in reality it was a Jacobean cottage. "Because of who I was," he says, "it was like I'd sold the Red Flag and moved into Ceausescu's palace."

After the cottage, he lived in a caravan for five years; he now shares a rented flat in Weybridge, Surrey, with his long-time girlfriend, Louise Bailey, who also models, and their three-year-old son, Jack. He has spent 23 years with Sham 69 on and off, so why do people accuse him of betraying his roots?

"The modelling can't do me any harm," he explains, "because if someone says 'you've sold out' then I say: 'Come to my house. Look here's my bank balance. Where have I sold out?' All that's happened is someone's asked me to wear some clothes. By wearing those clothes I can keep Sham 69 going, because no record company wants to bring out my records. I have to get the money together, make an album cheaply and then say to a record company: 'Do you want to buy this off me?'"

And, at least as far as the established labels are concerned, they do



Jimmy Pursey, dedicated punk rocker and part-time model

Rex Features

not. As Pursey sees it, punk is supposed to have had its day 20 years ago, and who wants some 43-year-old shouting from the rooftops about social injustice? Sham's last album, *The A-Files*, was released independently last year after being turned down by Creation, Oasis's label.

But he still believes in punk because it incites people to be constructive. "Intellectuals told us: 'You can't change the world.' But we did change the world."

It is the kind of spirit he saw in another person who tried to show that anything is possible if you break down the barriers: "I know Lady Diana was a punk at heart. She was upsetting everyone by being an agent provocateur."

"She was saying: 'Yes, of course I can join in and wear a beautiful dress.' But then she might be off treading on land-mines in Angola.

She was saying you can be anyone you like - why do you have to be holed in?"

It is also the kind of spirit he sees now in environmental campaigners. He calls them "punks" because they have grabbed the conservation agenda and made it "we've got to do something". The proceeds of Sham 69's last two singles, "Swampy" and "Rainbow Warrior", went not to the band but to conservationists, and, if he can find a buyer, all the revenue raised from the next single, "Direct Action", will go to the E-team.

When he is not giving away money, Pursey is rejecting chances to make money. These range from acting jobs - he turned down the lead roles in *Quadrophonia* and *The Wall* - to fashion assignments and even gigs. Three months ago he was offered "serious money" to play a festival in Stuttgart and rejected it

because Sham have already played there. But in September or October he will be performing in Argentina. "I'd rather go somewhere that's never seen Sham 69 before."

It is a demanding personal manifesto, when most of the money you make feeds a career that makes you no money. And it is still more demanding when you take on jobs only if they are skint, and even then only if they are right. Pursey, however, does not so much plead poverty as choose it. "I'm skint because I write politically," he explains. "But the important thing is that I'm probably more Jimmy Pursey now than I've ever been in my life. I know when I say what I say that I don't say it from my bank account and I don't say it from my happy-go-lucky little middle-class suburban lifestyle."

It's not a dirty rotten job, but someone's gotta do it.

ARTS DIARY

DAVID LISTER

I ONCE wrote a spoof story, an April Fool, that a television drama department was planning to show a new season of plays featuring under-age sex, incest, rape, an interracial murder, and a woman having her tongue cut out.

They were, of course, all Shakespeare plays. All spoofs come true in the end. And this week we learn that ITV has commissioned a number of well known writers to update Shakespeare into police dramas, thrillers and modern comedies.

Talks are said to be already under way to produce the first three plays with Andrew Davies, adapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, Jimmy McGovern, the playwright behind *Cracker*, and Paula Milne, who wrote *The Politician's Wife*. Other writers being mooted include Hanif Kureishi, Malcolm Bradbury, Alan Bleasdale, Lynda La Plante and Simon Nye.

While it is diverting to envisage Macbeth pleading "gissa dagger" in a Bleasdale adaptation, or spilling the beans about life with Lady Mac in a Kureishi version, the whole exercise is a depressing idea. Like the over-praised foreign language films of Shakespeare that were in vogue in the Sixties, it is to write off the importance of his use of language.

Shakespeare told thrilling and funny, though not always original stories; but he was also a poet, writing in a poetic form. Why does ITV assume that its audience cannot be entertained, moved and transported by such poetry?

Why is Andrew Davies, who used much of Jane Austen's own language and idiom in his adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, apparently reluctant to extend the same latitude to Shakespeare? Why indeed use adaptations at all? The amount of genuine Shakespeare on the box, on any channel, is pitiful. Just

what are they afraid of? And the project is likely to cost around £28m - a sum that would enable the RSC to tour the real thing to every corner of the country or, better still, to put the real thing on television.

A PETITION to stop the threat of charging for use of the British Library is to be launched next week. This was decided upon at a private gathering of library users at the Drill Hall in London.

According to my woman at the meeting, it was a productive but rather strange affair. Those in attendance were largely academics including, I gather, a disproportionate number of Italian scholars from University College London. And sprinkled among them were members of the Socialist Workers Party, an organisation I thought had more or less ceased to exist in the recent past.




"Not so," says my woman. "They want to make free admission their issue. They still use the same sort of language and talked a lot about 'The Campaign'. But they are rather useful to us. They do the Xeroxing."

WE ALL have gaps in our knowledge, hut... One of my colleagues on a national news agency was telling me this week of knowledge gaps in the youthful staff on his newsdesk. When the actor Michael Denison's death was announced on Wednesday, the youthful staff got rather excited. They had not heard of Denison, and assumed this was the dazzling Brazilian footballer Denilson.

But I can beat that. Queuing for the film *Titanic*, I was remarking to a friend about the cost of filming the scene in which "the boat sinks". The person in front of me turned round, glared, and said indignantly: "Thank You Very Much!"

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

BY FIONA STURGES

OVERVIEW	CRITICAL VIEW	ON VIEW	OUR VIEW
 <p>THE EXHIBITION BRUCE NAUMAN</p> <p>A selection of work by the American artist, mostly comprised of blazing neon signs and video installations. The show is curated by Christine Van Assche of the Pompidou Centre in Paris.</p>	 <p>THE GIG JAMES BROWN</p> <p>The granddaddy of soul shows that he's not ready to quit yet (though he can't still manage the splits) as he makes his long-awaited appearance at the Barbican as part of the <i>Inventing America</i> concert series.</p>	 <p>THE FILM THE GINGERBREAD MAN</p> <p>Robert Altman's rain-soaked adaptation of John Grisham's novel. Kenneth Branagh - still parading his lingo beard - plays an adulterous attorney who becomes involved with a mysterious waitress.</p>	
<p>A disgruntled Richard D North commented "it is a fascinating example of the levels of guff and ennui that affluent society started producing in the Sixties." Nauman "comes close to banishing one's interest in any art which has to be installed and yearn for anything which needs no more than a few nails in a wall." <i>The Guardian</i> disagreed. "It is magnificent. It is awful. It is heart-stopping. It is grand and terrible and worth all the pain... a mind-battering assault, as stimulating as it is aggressive." <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> likened it to "the seventh circle of Dante's Inferno," and discovered "deep, irremediable melancholy beneath its superficial aggression."</p>	<p>"Although no longer able to dazzle with the fleet footwork and athleticism of his heyday, Brown retains the charisma of a pioneering band leader," exclaimed Geoff Brown, and concluded "Brown still clearly remains a major influence." "Given his notoriously erratic behaviour in the past decade, it was a small mercy that James turned up at all," remarked the <i>Evening Standard</i>, berating the show as "high on spectacle but low on substance." "The show did not live up to its early promise," agreed the <i>Daily Telegraph</i>, complaining of "a lack of momentum... As time went on, it degenerated into a cheesy, Las Vegas-style revue."</p>	<p>Bruce Nauman is at the Hayward Gallery, South Bank, London SE1, until 6 September. For booking and enquiries, call 0171-261 0127.</p> <p>Continuing the Barbican's <i>Inventing America</i> series, you can see 'Shades of Blues', featuring Taj Mahal and Eric Bibb, tomorrow. For enquiries, call 0171-638 4141.</p> <p>The <i>Gingerbread Man</i> opened yesterday and is now out on general release, certificate 15. Running time, 115 minutes.</p>	<p>Traditionalists and aesthetes will be sorely disappointed. Never one to make the viewer comfortable, Nauman's art is more intimidating than uplifting and assaults the ear as much as the eye. This is not a show for the faint-hearted, but it remains compelling all the same. Not to be missed.</p> <p>At 65 years old, it's too much to expect Brown to match the explosive shows of the old days. There may be less of the fancy footwork, but the privilege of watching the Godfather of funk perform a string of legendary classics should be more than enough to get your hips swingin' and your shoulders shakin'.</p> <p>Altman's trademark improvising is sadly absent in this mediocre adaptation. Altman and Grisham prove to be a difficult pairing and this picture will leave fans of either unsatisfied. The continual monsoon is not enough to divert viewers from the film's skimpy script and inappropriate casting.</p>

THIS WEEK IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

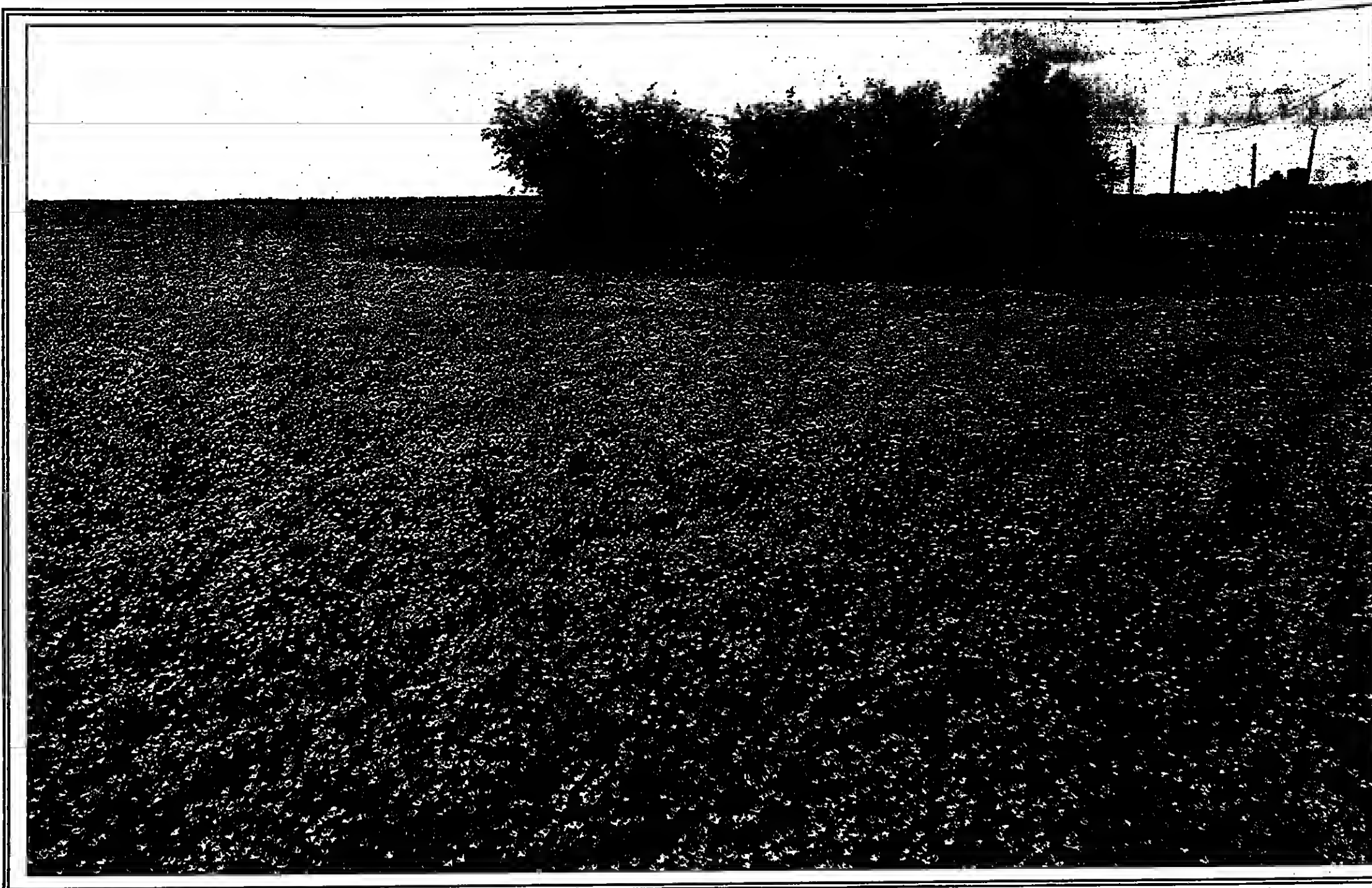


Oh Mrs Thomas!

Caitlin, wife of Dylan, as she has never been seen before. Blake Morrison glimpses the wilder side of the poet's wife

PLUS

To Greenland's icy mountains for some hunting, shooting and fishing

NATURE
NOTE

THE SHEETS of powdery blue now gracing many fields are linseed, a variety of flax grown for its oil-producing seeds. After the violent yellow glare of oilseed rape, the soft colour of the flowers falls easily on the eye - but it may not be around for much longer. At the moment linseed attracts the highest subsidy of any arable crop - about £200 per acre - but one of the Agenda 2000 proposals for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is that subsidies on all combine-harvested crops should become the same and, without its special support, linseed will be uneconomic for British farmers.

At the moment they grow it mainly because of the subsidy, but also because it acts as a useful break-crop, preparing the ground for wheat the following year.

The seeds which form when the flowers have gone over are minute, and the crop generally yields less than a ton of seed per acre, compared with up to four tons for wheat.

Once, at the beginning of the cricket season every schoolboy used to scrape his bat and give it a fresh coat of linseed oil.

Now the product is used for cattle feed and in industrial processes such as the manufacture of linoleum.

DUFF HART-DAVIS

Vintage Bury St Edmunds, 1998



The Rondo grape

Peter Macdiarmid

Vines were grown in Britain by the Romans, so why not cultivate them in the era of global warming? Patricia Cleveland-Peck visits a vineyard with potential

How commercially viable is grape-growing in this country? Well, Charles Macready, for one, is reasonably optimistic. Together with his partner, Jillian Simon, he runs a Suffolk vineyard owned by the National Trust.

It is set in the grounds of Ickworth House, that eccentric 18th-century house that has the famous rotunda.

The vineyard is situated in the old kitchen garden, an idyllic spot sheltered by brick walls, overlooking the river Linnet and surrounded by tranquil parkland.

For centuries, gangs of gardeners toiled long and hard here to produce fruit and vegetables for the big house, and now the somewhat smaller team of Charles and Jillian is labouring within the same walls to give the garden new life.

Three years ago they came across this abandoned paradise and developed the idea of starting a vineyard. Jillian had studied hor-

ticulture and viticulture, and was then managing the nearby Wyken vineyard at Bury St Edmunds.

"I also learned a lot from my father, who, after a visit to Australia in the Seventies, decided that wine production was the thing of the future," she says.

Charles interrupts with a Californian joke: "If you want a small fortune, the best way is to start with a large one and plant a vineyard..."

Undeterred by such warnings, he and Jillian set to work. Charles took a year's course in viticulture and the pair approached the National Trust with a proposal to convert the walled garden. "The Trust was keen and supportive," Charles recalls.

The National Trust proved to be a model landlord, undertaking the mammoth task of clearing the footings of some derelict greenhouses and providing 300 tons of topsoil to fill the holes. Charles and Jillian then set to. They prepared the soil and, as vines need support, hired a tractor and post-rammer and put in the first trellises themselves.

"The job took the two of us two weeks in sub-zero temperatures," Jillian remembers ruefully.

The next stage was ordering the vines from the specialist nursery in Luxembourg.

Only a handful of grape types are suitable for cultivation in Britain, and they selected Bacchus and auxerrois and spent a whole day in May planting 2,000 tiny vines. They woke up the following morning to find that an unexpected late frost of -7°C had killed a large proportion of the little plants.

"Spring frost is one of the vine's main enemies," Charles explains. "In an older plant, only the buds are vulnerable; but because these were so young, the whole plant was killed." There was nothing for it but to re-stock and start again.

"We couldn't give up, we'd invested too much," Jillian adds. "Besides which, we knew the frosts couldn't go on and on."

The walled garden at Ickworth is flanked by two ancient frost-channelling walls that extend down to the river, which has been land-

scaped into a lake. "These were built to divert frost from the garden - water raises temperature, so the frost doesn't hang around," Charles explains. "It doesn't quite work - the hill opposite is higher and it sends down frost too - but undoubtedly it helps a bit."

So is the venture viable? Having survived the loss of those first vines, three years on Charles and Jillian are optimistic.

"We've had our first vintage," says Jillian. "Only 300 bottles, but in 1996 we planted the other side of the vineyard with Rondo and pinot noir vines and these should produce our first red grape harvest this September. All being well, we can expect some 4,000 bottles."

"It helps, of course, that we can market all the wine here through the National Trust," adds Charles.

"The UK does produce good wine, and has done so for a long time."

Accepted wisdom has it that the Romans introduced viticulture to Britain. However, the UK Vineyards Association reports that a

prehistoric grape plant was found by archaeologists in Dorset, suggesting that Bronze Age man may have been growing vines.

Wine-making by no means ended with the Romans; as many as 40 vineyards were recorded in the Domesday Book.

Even as late as the 18th century, Charles Hamilton of Painshill wrote: "My wine has a finer flavour than the best champagne."

"It can be done," says Charles.

Visitors to the National Trust's Ickworth House, Horringer, Bury St Edmunds (01284 735270), can see the vineyard as part of their visit. The house and gardens are open from March to November; the gardens are open daily, between 10am and 5pm.

Admission costs £5.20 for adults, £2.20 for children. Guided tours of the vineyard are held on the last Sunday in the month, from 11am to 12.15pm. These cost £6.50; the price includes a tasting of Ickworth wine. Call the above number to book.

The giant in your footsteps

Weekend walk: pay your respects to a famous chalk giant. By Sophie Poklewski Koziell

THIS IS a gentle, circular walk through chalk downland, around the wide valley of the Cerne river. It starts at Cerne Abbas, at the striking chalk-cut figure of a giant. He is the outline of a magnificent man, erect in every sense of the word, striding across the hillside, club in hand. Despite his neolithic appearance, there is some doubt as to how old he really is: some think he is Roman (AD200-ish), some even think he may be only about 200 years old. Whatever his origins, he is a true giant in all proportions and locals still swear that sleeping within his sight works a powerful fertility spell for women.

Starting at the viewpoint for the giant on the A352, follow the signs to the picnic area, then walk past it and turn right on to a footpath, just before the stone bridge. Follow the river Cerne into the village, and turn into Long Street. This is a historian's dream: nearly every house is of a different era and style. Thatched roofs join slate, and brick lies alongside stone, flint and timber. Look out for the early 19th-century, many-paned shop fronts opposite the New Inn. The village store is full of local advertisements - from pick-your-own to a toenail-cutting service (£5).

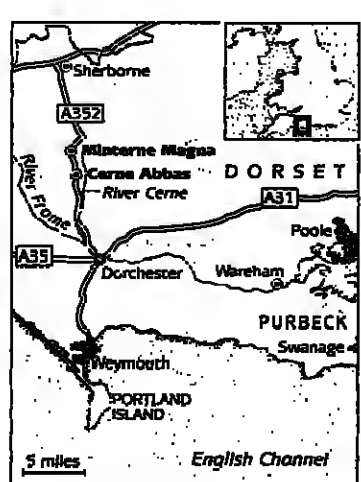
Turn left after the Red Lion pub into Abbey Street, towards the

church of St Mary the Virgin. This has some unusual painted wall texts inside, and some rather worn, wide-mouthed, monster corbels on the outside. Opposite the church stands a row of splendid 15th-century houses. Their roofs dip and curl; the beams haphazardly support bulging walls.

Carry on up the street, past the well-stocked duck pond to the remains of the Benedictine abbey - well worth a look, at the cost of a small donation in the honesty box. Continue through the arched gateway into the graveyard and follow the signs to St Augustine's well. Surrounded by crumbling medieval walls, and draped with ferns and ivy, with clear water running down through a series of shallow ponds, this makes a tranquil spot for a brief pause.

Numerous myths surround the spring, but the most amusing is that St Augustine, on his round of evangelising, asked some thirsty shepherds what they desired to drink: water or beer. They piously answered "water", whereupon the saint struck the ground with his staff and a spring sprang up. Wrong answer, I suppose.

Retrace your steps to the arched gateway and then take the path marked on the wooden post - "Giant's Hill". Once out of the graveyard, head diagonally up across the



field past many curious lumpy mounds. These are the remains of the original abbey. Keeping the fence on the left, walk to the end of the field and climb the stile. Turn left on to a bridleway that leads gently up Giant's Hill for half a mile. At the top of the hill, follow the bridge path across the field, past the stone gate, for about 200 yards. Then turn sharp left through the small gate and straight out across the field. At this point you will see fine views across the valley.

Follow the bridle path past the little wood on the right, down the slope and through the gate. Here the

path drops steeply before curving right. Continue on the path for three-quarters of a mile, across the chalk downland. Shortly after a small wood there are two gates: go through the first and turn left immediately. Carry on for half a mile until the path meets a partially tarmac track. Turn left on to this track and continue downhill. Minterne House can be seen down to the left in the valley bottom. About a quarter of a mile on, just after the end of a small wood, take the gate on the left into the field. The path is not clear, but walk diagonally down, through the grazing sheep, to a gate on the right, mid-field. Then continue down to a small wooden gate beside a copse, where the path becomes clear again. Keep straight along the path over a ford, past the church and into Minterne Magna.

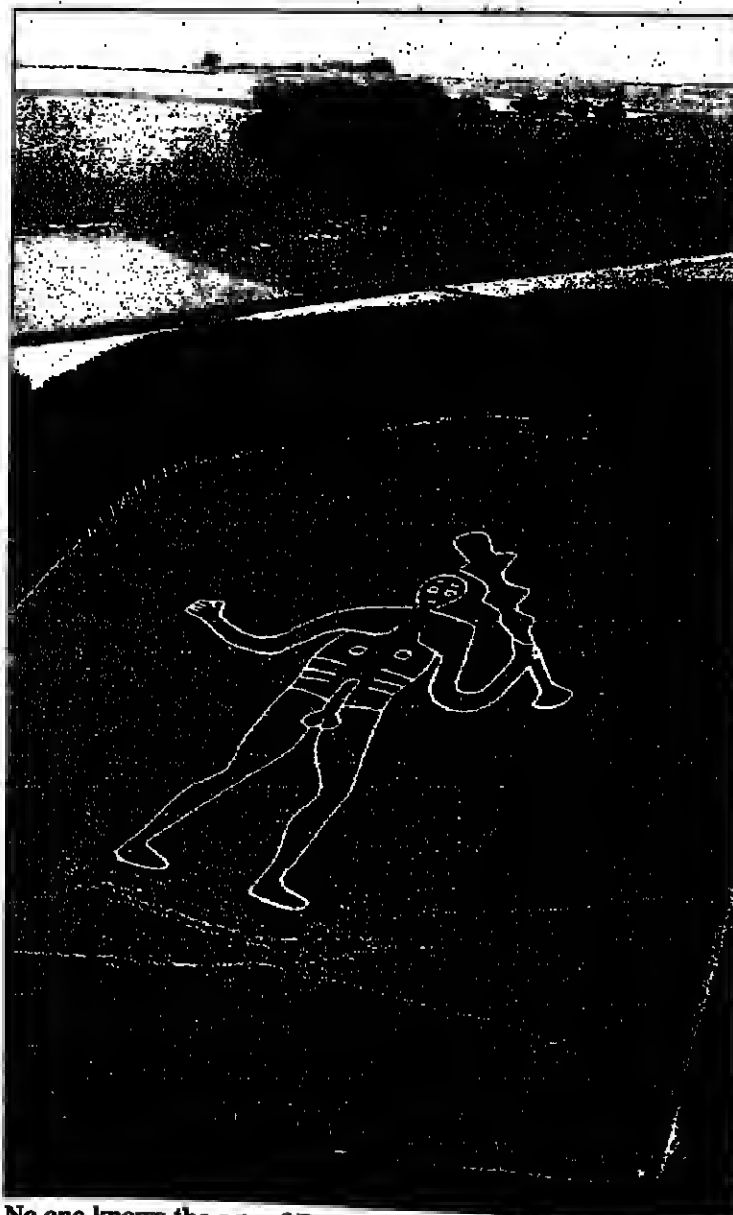
Here it is possible to continue the walk through the gardens of Minterne House (entrance £2-£3). There is a wonderful, mile-long walk, well marked, that leads through the woodland valley, past small cascades and lakes. The gardens were landscaped by "Capability" Brown and are particularly known for their rhododendrons, magnolias and azaleas.

To return to Cerne Abbas, continue left along the road, past Minterne House.

After the next corner, pass through the gate on the right and up the hill, through an avenue of lime trees. After the gate at the top there is a small quarry ahead. Turn left and walk across this top field towards the gate at the far corner. After the gate, head for the top left-hand corner of the field, through a break in the hedge and on to a grassy bridge path. Turn left and follow this path as it plunges down through a wood and out through a line of ivy-hugged sycamore, on to a terraced road. Turn left and walk along the road. Cerne Manor House can be seen ahead.

About a quarter of a mile before the house, take a footpath on the right that starts from the verge and goes up towards, and then behind, a line of trees. This footpath crosses the road and continues in a straight line towards Cerne Abbas, which can be seen in the distance. The path meets the road after a white gate. Turn left, and continue until the road meets the large A352. Then turn right, and the parking area is visible just ahead. Cerne Abbas is well stocked with pubs and tea-houses to quench a variety of thirsts and appetites.

Length of walk: 5-6 miles. Map: Ordnance Survey Explorer 117 or OS Landranger 194



No one knows the age of Dorset's giant chalk man

Paradise rises from the swamp

The simple act of flooding an old lake in Cheshire has created a haven for wildlife.

By Duff Hart-Davis

A cynic might easily describe Blakemere Moss as a dirty great hole in the ground. Yet to me this huge bog in Delamere Forest Park, near Chester, is charged with mystery and excitement, especially now that it is once again filling with water after nearly two centuries of artificially induced drought.

When I first saw it, 18 months ago, it immediately put me in mind of Conan Doyle's prehistoric lost world. Then it was dry, but now its appearance is even more striking. Imagine a shallow, oblong crater, 80 acres in extent, surrounded by forest. All round its rim slender, straight-trunked Scots pines rise from tall banks, closing it off from surrounding civilisation and giving it an air of secrecy.

In cloudy weather sheets of black water gloomily reflect the ring of trees, and from far out in the lagoons come the screech and chatter of nesting birds. No matter that the noisiest creatures are only gulls: in this primeval setting the cacophony could easily be emanating from leathery, bat-like flying reptiles with a 15-ft wing span.

The magic of Blakemere Moss derives from its antiquity, and from the extraordinary way in which nature formed it. At the end of the last ice age, maybe 10,000 years ago, two immense chunks broke off a retreating glacier and settled on this site. Their colossal weight gradually forced down the ground beneath them and left two contiguous depressions known as kettle-holes, into which water drained from the land around, slowly forming a marsh.

Until early in the 19th century it remained one of Cheshire's numerous meres, or mosses. Then the government of the day conceived the idea that the area should grow oak, to supply the Navy with ships' timbers. Napoleonic prisoners were put to work digging drainage



Blakemere Moss - to some, a dirty great hole in the ground, to others, an area charged with mystery and excitement

Tom Pilston

ditches, but their labours were largely futile, partly because the underlying peat had accumulated in places to a depth of nearly 20 feet, and partly because there was only one exit channel from the entire bowl, so that the land never dried out enough to grow good trees.

Enter the Forestry Commission, which, in the Fifties, tried again and planted conifers, according to the received wisdom of the day.

Yet these too failed to flourish, in spite of prodigious efforts to keep the ditches open, and in 1994 the commission took a momentous decision: to abandon all their attempts to produce a commercial crop. Instead, it was decided, the area

should be returned to wetland. For men dedicated to growing trees, this meant a major mental adjustment - but down came the western hemlock, sitka spruce and Scots pine, opening up a wide vista. Out went nearly 5,000 tons of timber. Thousands more tons of lop and top were piled into heaps and burnt in the spring of 1997. A new concrete sluice was built to control the exit channel, and last summer boards were slotted in to dam the outflow.

The result has been a spectacular success. As the water level rose and the lowest areas of the basin began to flood, birds poured in: gulls, ducks, geese, swans, moorhens and coots all found the

new lagoons much to their liking. Pondweed - probably brought in on the birds' feet - started to proliferate, turning some areas brilliant green. Soon the place was alive with insects, dragonflies among them; swallows and swifts began hawking over the water.

Locals who regularly walk or cycle around the moss were thrilled by the change. In February, when the level had to be temporarily lowered so that the foresters could fell a few more trees that were about to be flooded, the office was swamped by telephone calls from people demanding to know where all the water was going. Now it is inching up again. Numberless small islands

break the surface, but over the old ditches the water is probably eight feet deep.

For Peter Rawlinson, the forest manager, the easy, physical part of the operation is over.

"Everyone can see that the mere's flooded," he says. "We've created a wonderful conservation site. But the question is, what's going to happen next?"

His future management options are fairly limited. He can control vegetation to some extent by raising or lowering the water level, and one priority is to flood and kill the birch, which otherwise would take over much of the site. Yet conflict will inevitably arise between the

demands of different species. Inundation will kill the birch trees quite quickly, but it will also kill other, desirable plants in the lowest areas. As Mr Rawlinson says, he will "just have to watch and see how things develop as nature works out a new balance".

One ambitious scheme - at the moment no more than a gleam in his eye - is to connect Blakemere with other mosses in the forest by digging channels that could act as wildlife corridors. A particular target is Black Lake, which supports a colony of rare, white-faced dragonflies and lies less than half a mile away.

The project has provided a golden opportunity for Anya Moon, a

postgraduate student at Staffordshire University, who is making a two-year study of flora and fauna, and of the chemical properties of the moss. Already she has made one exciting discovery - of sundew, the tiny carnivorous plant with leaves fringed with red spikes, which curl over to trap insects. Until she spotted it, nobody realised it was present.

Yet Anya is by no means the only trained observer with eyes on Blakemere. In three years, by a single bold stroke, the Forestry Commission has turned the clock back two centuries, and specialists in many countries are watching eagerly to see how the great experiment evolves.

Ways to beat the wee biting beasts

They swarm in thousands and they want your blood. No, not vampires - Highland midges.

Daniel Butler is itching to tell you about them

"DON'T EAT bananas. Try sticking sprigs of bog myrtle behind your ears," advises the Scottish Tourist Board jokingly. They are referring to methods of repelling the midge - or, to be precise, the Highland midge, *Culiseta impunctatus*. This is responsible for the tide of discomfort experienced by thousands of visitors to the west coast of Scotland each year. Loch Broom FM even broadcasts a midge forecast (based mainly on weather conditions). This started as a joke, but has struck a chord.

Even so, entomologists plead that the problem should be put into perspective. For most of *C. impunctatus*'s life cycle, it is harmless, wintering as larvae in damp top-soil, living on decaying plant matter and emerging in early summer to feed on nectar. It is during its second breeding cycle that problems begin.

Although the males are vegetarian, females need blood to breed their eggs. They identify their prey by the heat and carbon dioxide given out by all mammals. Normally, this comes from horses, cattle and deer, but a midge intent on reproduction is not choosy. If a human being wanders into range at the appropriate point, it is a case of all donations being gratefully received.

The result is economically damaging to many areas of the western Highlands. It is almost

impossible to assess the full impact, but it is undoubtedly huge. Forestry workers are particularly badly affected because the insects fly throughout the day in the cool, damp shade beneath the trees. According to one estimate, at the height of the season midges can account for a 20 per cent cut in productivity, with logging gangs forced to stop work because of the nuisance. Similarly, anglers trying to make the most of the early morning and evening clash badly with the time of peak midge activity.

"There are no hard figures, but there's a lot of anecdotal evidence," says George Hendry, author of *Midges of Scotland*. "My book becomes a best-seller every summer and, apparently, solicitors and estate agents tell people not to put big properties on the market during the midge season because it could put off rich American buyers."

Not surprisingly, the insects are deeply unpopular - a fact that others have tried to cash in on. A recent pro-bat campaign by the Scottish Wildlife Trust boasted that every one of the furry flying insectivores consumes 10,000 midges a night. "It was a good way of boosting a mammal with an image problem," laughs Alison Blackwell, a midge expert at the University of Dundee.

"But, unfortunately, most bats hunt later than the main

midge flight, just as warblers, swallows and nightjars miss the best opportunities during daylight. Nope, the beasts that bite you have far too few predators for human comfort."

Martin Harvey, an invertebrate conservationist at the Wildlife Trust, says not all midges should be tarred with the same brush as the Highland midge. "There's one totally harmless species that breeds in limestone pavements and is on the EU's biodiversity action plan," he says.

"In fact, of the 150 biting midges and 300 non-biting species, just one is responsible for virtually all the problems. We should try to maintain some sort of perspective on any difficulties that may exist."

Midges shun bright, dry or windy conditions and are at their worst around dawn or dusk. Bites can be avoided by staying indoors during these critical periods. Even so, almost everyone visiting the affected regions (and these include most damp, vegetation-rich areas), will find themselves bothered at some point.

According to Fred Silver, who works in the heart of midge country at The Stornoway Gazette, the best answer is stoicism: "I was brought up in Lancashire, where vast clouds of them used to wait at the garden gate. You just had to run through them and bear it," he



The voracious Highland midge, blood-sucking scourge of workers and tourists in some of Scotland's most beautiful and picturesque countryside

JL Mason/
Arden London

So is there an effective midge cure in sight in the foreseeable future? Apparently not, according to Alison Blackwell. "Research into midges is underfunded," she sighs.

"Most of the basic work was done way back in the Forties, but then the money dried up. Of course, we're itching to build on it all."

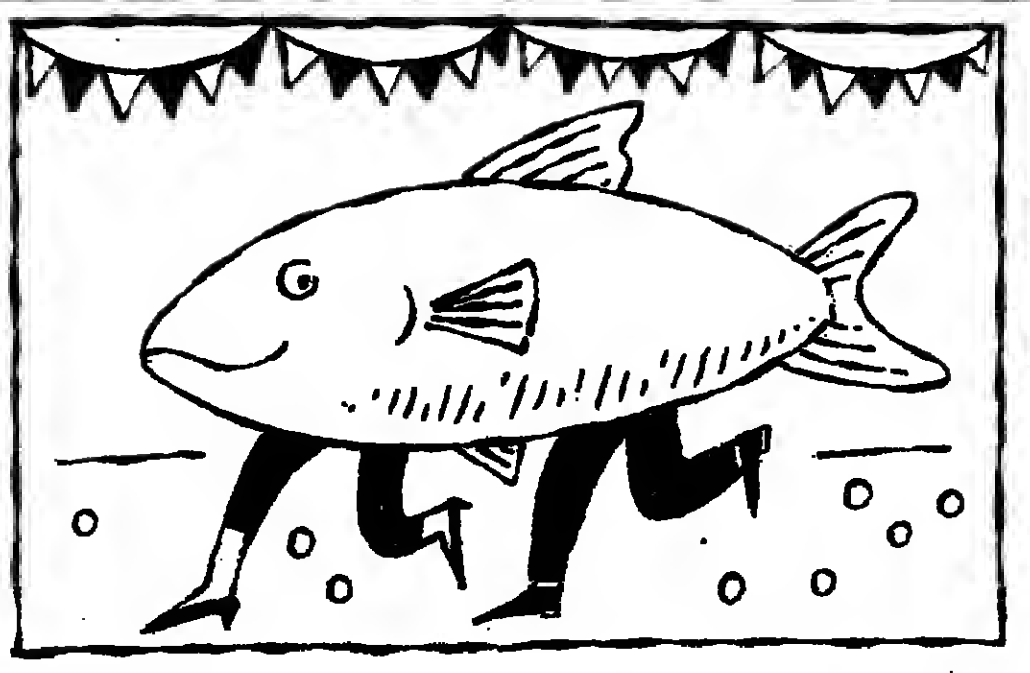
Midges of Scotland by George Hendry, is published by Merkat Press, price £4.95

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEKEND

MEET MISS Pearl and Master Mussel and flap your fins at the Fish Slappers' Dance at the Oyster Festival this weekend at Whitstable - the town that has been famous for its oysters since Roman times. The Sea Scouts will bring in a ketchful of oysters to parade round the town before they are distributed to Whitstable's pubs, restaurants and cafes. On Thursday, there is a procession from St Peter's Church down to the sea, where a Blessing of the Waters ceremony takes place in honour of St James, patron saint of sailors.

The Whitstable Oyster Festival runs from 25 July to 2 August. The Landing of the Oysters parade and dance will be held on Saturday 25 July from 1pm. The Blessing of the Waters ceremony, Thursday 30 July at 7pm. More festival information is available on 01227 265666.

SALLY KINDBERG



Walking back to happiness

We neglect them, force them into tight spaces for hours at a time, put all our weight on them and still expect them to carry us around. No wonder our feet hurt. **Rhiannon Batten** thinks it is high time we took care of our tootsies



How can you put your best foot forward without a bit of tender loving care? Treat your feet to some serious therapy and in no time at all they'll look good enough to slip into the slinkiest of sandals.

Nicola Kurtz

That moment when you come home with tired, red-hot feet and plunge them into cool water so that they almost sizzle is probably the closest many of us get to giving our feet any attention at all. The feet are one of the most neglected parts of the body so it is no wonder that many people cannot bear to look at their toes, let alone expose their feet to the world.

Looking after your feet will not only get them presentable enough to slip into the latest summer sandals, it may also improve your general well-being. The foot carries many sweat glands, and some believe that clearing any blockages may have beneficial effects on your whole body.

Palguni Raja, a senior chiropodist for Scholl, recommends that people see a chiropodist every six to 12 months, more often if necessary. "People do most damage to their feet by trying to carry out chiropody treatments themselves, by running around outside with bare feet and by neglecting to wash and thoroughly dry their feet every day," she says. If you think it is time your feet had a check up, the Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists (0171-486 3381) can help you find your nearest state registered chiropodist.

Some take the theory that you are what your feet are even further, by using reflexology, a form of complementary medicine that treats the body by massaging the feet. Specific reflex points are said to correspond with specific parts of the body and massaging the feet is generally thought to be beneficial to sufferers of ailments such as stress and migraines. A treatment usually costs between £15 and £25 and lasts for an hour. For £150, the British Reflexology Association, at Monk's Orchard, Whitbourne, Worcestershire, WR6 5RB, will send you a list of registered reflexologists.

If you'd rather start with something less radical, a regular pedicure is the ideal way to keep your toes in shape. Elizabeth Terry of the US style magazine *In Style* says: "Good pedicures are so affordable in the States that people have them regularly, not just as a special treat, but as part of good grooming."

In Britain, however, a pedicure is seen as something of an extravagance, and it shows. Midge Killen, of Amazing Nails, has a pet hate for the bumpy, chipped toenails she sees on the Tube. "That same foot could look a million dollars with a

little care," she insists. According to Killen's customers, when you finish a good pedicure it is as if you have taken off a second shoe.

The OPI (0181-868 3400) keeps a list of registered pedicure salons throughout Britain but, if you would rather care for your feet in the privacy of your own home, there are several products worth trying. Scholl products are well known, but a clever recent addition is the new Fresh Step range, designed with odour-shy women in mind.

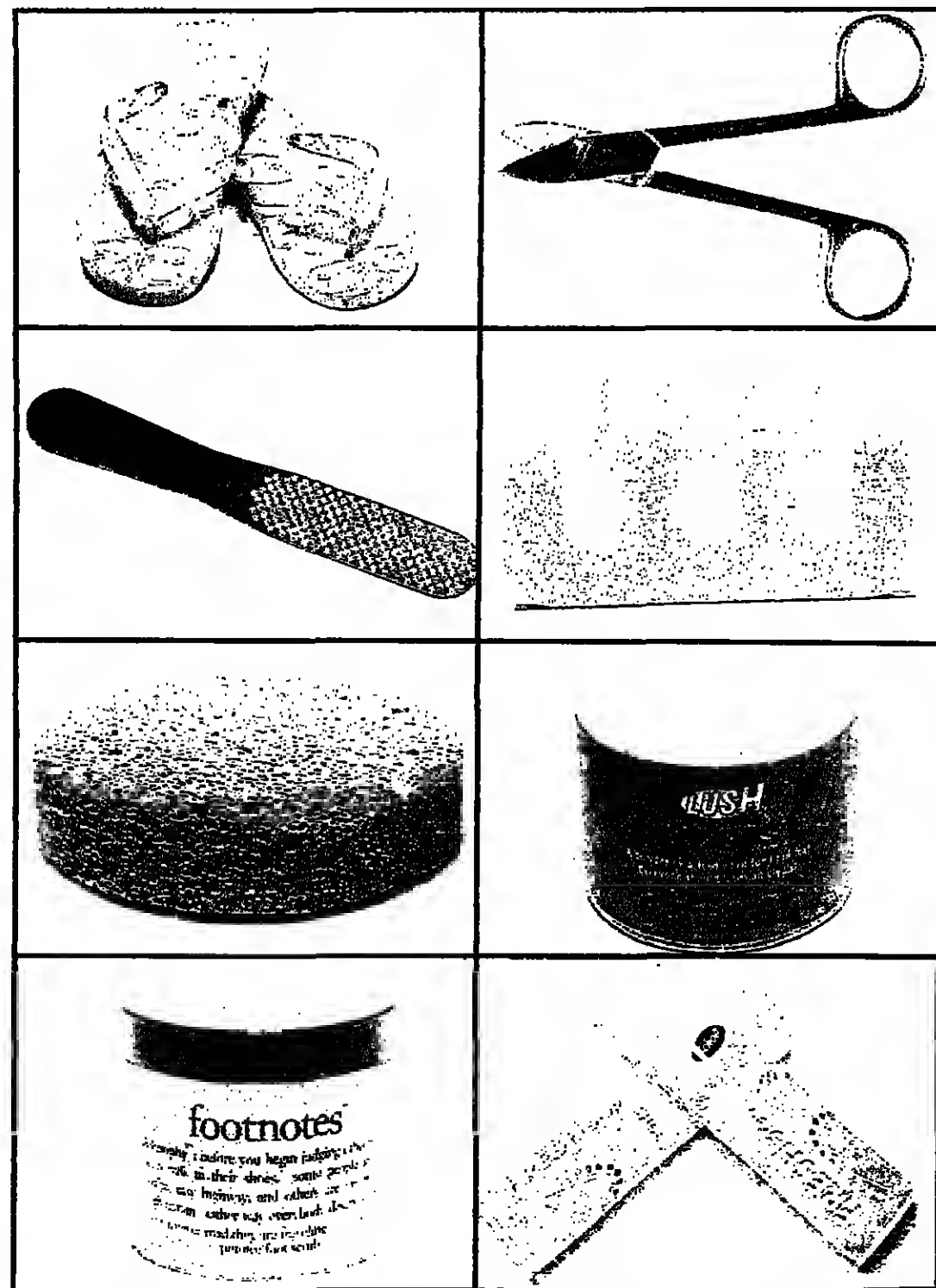
The tireddest of toes will also benefit from adding some Olygist powder to water and stepping into the cloudy, cassis-smelling foot-soak to cleanse, deodorise, soothe and relieve sore soles. It even doubles up as a foot talc, for dry feet.

Or you could slip into Borghese's (01273 400085 for stockists) spa socks, available for £39.50 from August. These have a patented polymer lining that was originally used by medics to aid the healing process after hand surgery. Their skin hydrators, revitalisers and strengtheners are activated by body temperature, and the smell of the grape-seed oil, vitamin E, olive oil and jojoba oil is lovely. The feet will feel revitalised after 45 minutes but they can be worn overnight.

On a final note, it is reassuring to hear from Killen that even the best-dressed feet sometimes need a bit of TLC. Apparently, a certain style of expensive designer sandal has been causing many a fashionable foot to hobble down to her salon this summer in search of repair.

FOOT NOTES

1. Soak your feet for four to six minutes and then slough off dead skin with a foot file, three or four times a week.
2. Dry between the toes properly and use a powder.
3. Make sure your toenails are trimmed straight across to avoid ingrowing nails.
4. Apply a special foot moisturiser rather than a normal hand or body lotion.
5. If you suffer from smelly feet, avoid wearing damp shoes, use an anti-perspirant and choose cotton socks.



Clockwise from top left: Flip-flops from Johnny Loves Rosie (0171-247 1496). At a special price of £7.95 to 'Independent' readers, including P&P. Toenail scissors, £1.29, Superdrug (0181-684 7000). Toe separators, 85p, Superdrug (0181-684 7000). Olygist foot soak, £3.50/100g, Lush (mail order 01202 668545).

Fresh Step Foot Spray and Fresh Step Shoe Spray, both £2.75, Scholl (01582 443300 for stockists). Philosophy footnotes pumice foot scrub, £11, Space NK (0171-299 4999). Foot Steps pumice Stepping Stone, £2, Virgin Vie (0870 9099092). Diamant foot file, £25, Space NK (0171-299 4999).

Where to go to treat your feet

Here are some of the best places to get your feet into condition

A PEDICURE at The Urban Retreat at Harvey Nichols (London branch 0171-201 8610, Leeds 0113 2440212) involves immersing your feet in a special salts whirlpool. They are then moisturised, pumiced and old nail varnish is removed before cuticle cream is applied and the nails are trimmed, filed and varnished. A one-hour pedicure using Aveda products costs £30.

THERE ARE 60 Scholl Total Foot-care Centres (call 01582 443300 for your nearest centre) nationwide and they exist as a health club for feet. Chiropody treatments, foot-care products, Scholl footwear and free foot examinations and shoe-fitting services are all available. A visit to a Scholl chiropodist consists of a foot bath, toenail trim, rough skin exfoliation, corn and callous removal and a relaxing massage to moisturise and tone the feet and lower legs. A session lasts around 30 minutes and costs from £20.

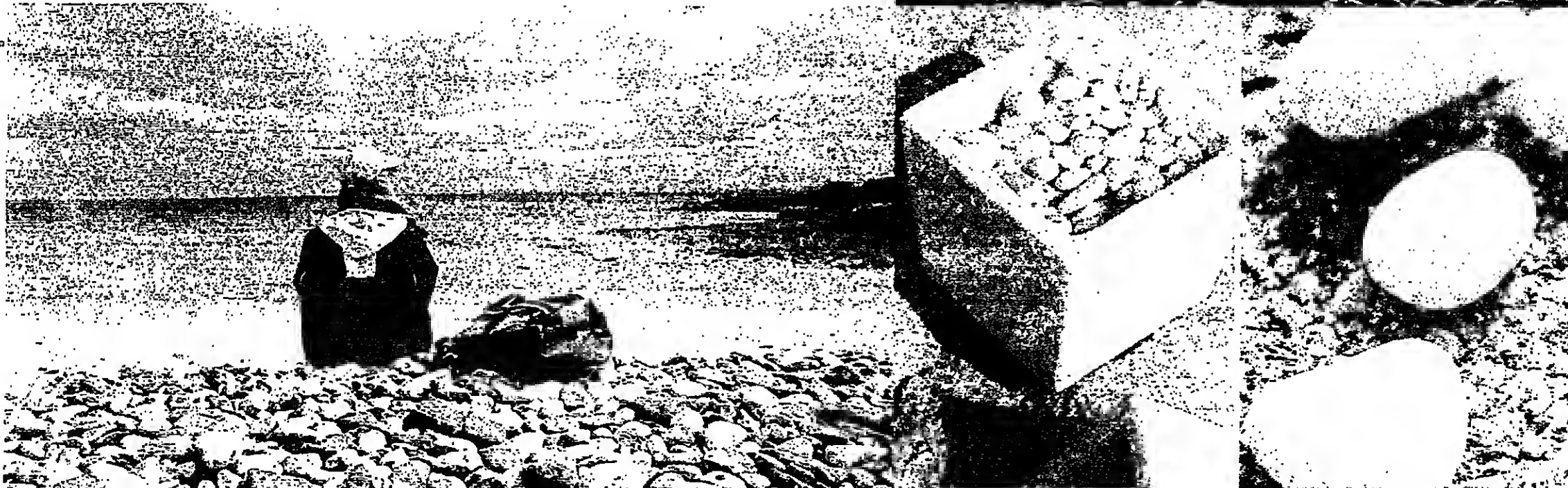
THE SANCTUARY Day Spa in Covent Garden (0171-420 5151), which is exclusively for women, has two foot treatments. The first is a luxury foot treatment which lasts for approximately 45 minutes and involves a foot spa, scrub, massage and paraffin wax heat treatment. It costs £25 for members and £30 for non-members. The reflexology treatment lasts for about an hour and costs £40 for members or £48 for non-members.

A VISIT to Le Grain de Beauté (0171-259 9560) is said to be like giving the body a holiday in the south of France and pedicures here have one of the best reputations in London. The £30

pedicure involves one and a quarter hours of foot spa, dead skin removal, scrubbing, cuticle tidying, massage and painting. The deluxe pedicure takes about the same amount of time, costs £35, and includes having the feet softened in special warm boots.

THE GREEN Room (call 0171-937 6595 for the nearest salon) uses only Body Shop products (01903 731500 for the nearest stockists) and there are four foot treatments to choose from. The leg and foot refresher lasts 30 minutes and costs £19.50; the pedicure lasts 45 minutes and costs £20; the hand and foot massage lasts 15 minutes and costs £10; while the express pedicure lasts 15 minutes and costs £10.

AMAZING NAILS, at 21 South Molton Street, London (0171-355 3634), is run by Midge Killen who has pedicured Barbara Streisand's toes, no less. First the feet are checked to see whether you need a chiropody treatment with Gillian Michael of John Bell and Croydon (04325 144138). Afterwards, the feet are sprayed with a sterilising foot spray, then washed, dried, polished, exfoliated and oiled. A mask is put on the toenail to clean, sterilise, remove any discoloration and condition the nail before it is filed. Feet are exfoliated, scrubbed, cleansed, moisturised and revitalised and then the toenails are painted from a choice of 250 colours. The initial pedicure costs £30 and thereafter about £28.50. Amazing Nails sells a Feet To Go mail order pedicure kit for £13.95 and single nail varnishes for £7.95, or a set of six which can be used together to create 60 different shades for £15.



Top right: light some Peace Aroma Incense Sticks and burn them in a pebble holder, £10 for both. Or you could light a pebble candle, £12. Both are available mail order from Virgin Vie. Middle left: even the most sleek of homes can get in on beach style with these aluminium pebble door handles from Bombay Duck. Small £2.50, medium £3.50 and large £5. Near left: pebbles, £1.50/500g. Habitat. Give new life to a favourite planter by filling it with pebbles (centre left), or simply scatter some scented pebbles, £6 per bag, throughout the house, all Habitat

Designers in pebble dash

Natural stone around the home is the latest fashion but there is no need to make a lengthy excursion to the beach. Just visit your local design store. By Karen Falconer

I love your pebbles - did you bring them back from Devon?" would not long ago have been perfect dinner party banter, but as stones big and small become the latest must-have accessory for the home and garden, it is as likely as not this summer to be met with a half-embarrassed chuckle: "Um, oo, in fact the little green ones are Habitat, the shiny brown ones are Conran Shop and I bought the rocks in Sainsbury's Homebase."

It's back to nature with a vengeance - and rocks are fast becoming as much a feature of the modern interior as slate-lined bathrooms and zinc work surfaces.

With post-modern irony, the wave of naturalism that is sweeping us to the millennium is being satisfied as much from the clean shelves of high-street retailers as from stone-hunting quests along Britain's coasts and hills. After all, hugging even the most wondrous lump of stone along two kilometres of moorland is no easy feat - though it may turn out to look magnificent as a centre-piece on the dining-table.

That is one reason why Steven Einhorn - who sells by mail order from his eponymous design shop, and retails wholesale to the likes of Paul Smith and John Lewis - is doing so well.

Although he does produce special stone-based nail chairs on commission, this leader in the new Stone Age trend keeps mainly to easily manageable pieces. "Most people want something they can carry away with them," he points out, reasonably enough.

The interior of his shop on Is-

lington's Upper Street has a peaceful glow from candles flickering out of neat holes cut in smooth grey Cumbrian stones. These candles start at £16.45 and firestones cost from £37 each. Because of the very nature of stones, each purchase is different. Often people end up spending half an hour choosing the one they want.

"We get our rocks two or three times a year, mainly from Bird Island, a nature sanctuary in Cumbria. They wash up on the beach, so they are quite varied. It's a renewable source, so we aren't ravaging the

countryside, but we select all the stone that comes here."

Elsewhere, rocks are popular in other guises. At the Conran Shop chiselled-out pink, as well as grey, rocks, costing from £10.50, make homes for flowers and candles; bowls display an array of polished Chinese pebbles, from £4.50, while plain-glass vases are half-filled with stones before being topped with lilies or even a Spike light.

At Habitat, pebbles are sold in pale blue, white and black, while lava is used for shallow concrete bowls and planters.

"They are hand-carved from ancient Javanese lava stone," explains a spokeswoman. "It adds mystique."

Others take the pebble theme to its modern conclusion. Bombay Duck, for example, is producing aluminium pebble door handles, while Virgin Vie sells Swedish stoos as candle holders and fragrance burners, and a synthetic option too: packets of porous, biscuit-fired clay pebbles with five different scents to perfume the room and names such as peace, cherish and glee.

"They're inspired by a natural

pebble found on the river bed smoothed by the wind, waves and hands of time," chants the in-store labelling.

Rocks and stoos have long been regarded as almost sacred: pagan symbols of endurance and strength; the foundation and soul of the garden and house in Japanese philosophy. "Stoos come from the beginning of time. They harbour the gods and some of the primal energy from earliest times," says Sarah Shurety, of the Feng Shui Company. "On a table, without cluttering, they bring peace. And, they are a

traditional present for an elderly person because of their longevity."

But can a factory-produced, scented stone or a bargain bag of coloured pebbles play on the same feelings of purity and primal energy that people associate with the real thing?

"I can understand some people thinking, 'I didn't buy my dishes of pebbles; mine are real'," admits a Conran Shop spokesperson. "They are pure, simple and natural. Part of that whole feeling of going back."

Bought or found, others insist, they are all about the urban flow of life; anyway, it's almost impossible

to find enough of similarly tinted pebbles on the beach - even if you have the time. And, naturally, pebbles are good sellers.

In the stoos league, connoisseurs will always prefer the personal find, imbued with the perfect memory. Devon pink for a craggy look; Lakeland green for chunky green slate; Chisel Beach for Portland stone; Norfolk for amber brought across from the Baltic; the Northumberland coast for jet; Lyme Regis for fossils - but it takes a long time to find a significant collection, particularly as more and more people start to look.

So, while an exquisite stoos from a shop will never hold the memories of the perfect boulder found on a lustrous holiday stroll on top of the Sierra Nevada, or an unspoilt beach in the wilds of Scotland, with a little attention to geology you can still scupper the sniffs of the rock snobs with the tale of your own acquisitions. Ice Age journey across the North Sea many millions of years ago.

Steven Einhorn (0171-359 4977) is at 210 Upper Street, London

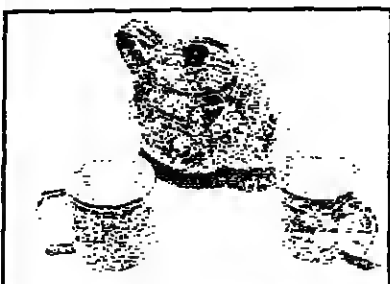
Phone 0645 334433 for your nearest Habitat store

The Conran Shop (0171 589 7401) is at 61 Fulham Road, London

Bombay Duck products are available mail order on 0181 749 7000

Virgin Vie has branches nationwide or phone 0670 909902 for mail order

GOOD THING



Start the day on a sensible note and make sure you find your way into work with a mug or two - £4.99 each - of tea from an A-to-Z teapot, £19.99, from Brats (0171-351 7674 for mail order).

MAD THING

FOR FASTIDIOUS travellers, or anyone who is too lazy to find their way to a washbasin - or into a packet of wet wipes - a new product has arrived on the shelves to help you on your way. NO H₂O is an essential item to keep in your pocket this summer because its special gel is formulated to clean hands without adding water. It costs £2.75, plus 75p p&p, from Opal London Limited (0181-208 0708 for mail order).

SHOP TALK

IMAGINE A cross between the shops at the Tate and London Zoo and you will have a good idea of the kind of things on sale at Fitch's Ark, actress Suzannah Fallow's contemporary art gallery.

Current items for sale include a Helen Kemp cat woman ceramic, £85; a glass penguin bowl by Julia Linstead, £350; and colourful elephant tableware by Karjana Nicholas, from £32. The best thing is that a percentage from each sale goes towards the Born Free Foundation, which campaigns for the conservation of endangered species.

Fitch's Ark, 6 Clifton Road, Little Venice, London, W9 1SS (0171 266 0302)

TIM STEIN

Waves of destruction

It was a tsunami that caused chaos in Papua New Guinea last week, not a mere tidal wave

IT WAS not a tidal wave that cost more than a thousand lives and swept away entire villages in Papua New Guinea. There was nothing tidal about it. Tidal waves are, as their name suggests, caused by the tides, which are in turn caused by the gravitational pull of the moon as it orbits the earth.

High "spring" tides occur at new and full moon when the pulls of the sun and moon are in alignment; low "neap" tides happen when the moon is in its first and third quarters and is at right angles to the direction of the sun. When stormy conditions combine with a naturally high tide, considerable waves can result. Those are the only true tidal waves.

When a vast wall of water is about to engulf you, however, you do not have time to stop and think about what caused it. And that may explain why the term "tidal wave" is so often used erroneously to describe the type of disaster that hit Papua New Guinea, which is properly known by the Japanese name of tsunami.

From the word *tsu*, harbour; and *nami*, waves, a tsunami is the result of an underwater earthquake, or even a volcanic eruption or mudslide at the seabed. As the ground gives way at the bottom of the ocean, a crack appears and fills with water, setting off a sequence of events of vast power. The displacement of huge quantities of water creates a massive wave that crosses the ocean at speeds greater than 1,000 kph, but at such a great depth that ships directly above it may feel nothing.

When the deep tsunami reaches shallower waters, its speed diminishes because of friction with the ground. The fast-moving tail section of the wave then catches up with its front, leading to a dramatic increase in the wave height, reaching crests of 50 metres or more that are capable of striking with devastating force.

The earliest recorded use in the Ox-



WILLIAM HARTSTON

ford English Dictionary of the word "tsunami" comes from *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields* by L. Hearn (1897) and gives a good account of the power and shock of such a wave as it reaches land: "Tsunami!" shrieked the people; and then all shrieks and all sounds and all power to hear sounds were annihilated by a nameless shock... as the colossal swell smote the shore with a weight that sent a shudder through the hills".

The speed at which a tsunami travels allows little time to warn the local population of its approach. Last Friday's disaster happened only minutes after the earthquake that set it off, making it impossible to warn people in coastal villages, let alone evacuate them or provide any form of shelter.

According to Japanese researchers, it began with a magnitude-7 quake at the sea-bottom where the Pacific plate thrusts beneath the India-Australia plate. Papua New Guinea is on the Pacific Rim, where the "Ring of Fire" belt of volcanoes follows a line of weak spots in the earth's crust where the two plates meet. Earthquake waves monitored at seismological institutes around the world suggest that a huge vertical crack in the Pacific plate was the main cause of the wave that followed.

An early warning system for tsunamis



All that remained of one building in Papua New Guinea after the tsunami

Reuters

would depend on predicting the earthquakes that precede them. Curiously, since undersea earthquakes have only recently been monitored, in earlier times it was accounts of the wave forms of tsunamis that provided information of historical undersea earthquakes.

Records indicate that tsunamis have struck Papua New Guinea 16 times this century, though last week's seems to have been the worst at least since 1886. Its destructive power surprised even seasoned tsunami watchers. According to Kevin McCue, of the Australian Geo-

logical Survey Organisation, scientists did not expect anything so bad when they recorded the earthquake itself.

"The sea-floor topography there must have been just right for the wave to come in and not spread out, but he focused right there on to that area," he explained. "The villagers could not have been in a worse spot." There had also been no evidence of the increased seismic activity that might have allowed the earthquake to be predicted.

"You do not have a tsunami like this every year," Steven Jaume, from the Ad-

vanced Centre for Earthquake Studies, told Reuters. "But I can think of several destructive tsunamis in the last decade," he added, citing incidents in Indonesia in 1994, in Nicaragua in 1992 and in Japan in 1991 and 1993. "This is not an unusual year," he said. "This is, unfortunately, normal."

The most infamous tsunami of all was in 1883, when the eruption of Krakatau created a wave that killed 36,000 in Sumatra, but even that was not as bad as the wave that destroyed Lisbon in 1755. That killed 60,000.

News of the weird – what Santa does in summer

... and other stories of the past week that missed the headlines. By William Hartston

HOME NEWS

Blackpool

Richard Rodriguez, who last week broke the world record for riding on a roller-coaster, finally got off the Big Dipper at Blackpool Pleasure Beach after another 10 days' riding to ensure that he was not overtaken by a Canadian rival. He agreed to end his ride only after the news arrived that Normand St Pierre had ended his 30-day ride on Le Montreuil in Montreal. After 32 days on the Big Dipper, Mr Rodriguez said: "I am feeling so excited, happy and overjoyed, it's almost impossible to explain."

Queuing

According to research by Audience Selection, the average Briton wastes

seven hours and 24 minutes a week waiting in queues and traffic jams. Young people aged 15-24 lose twice as much time as over-65s, but the Welsh waste the most time of all. Londoners lose an average of two hours a week owing to heavy traffic.

FOREIGN NEWS

Italy

The Italian beach workers' union has called a strike on 31 July when it is hoping to enforce a total shut-down of beach umbrellas. The protest is against a proposed tourism bill which, it says, ignores the rights of beach workers.

Denmark

Around 80 Santa Clauses from 10 countries attended the 35th annual World Congress for Father Christ-

mases in Copenhagen. "A lot of children ask for peace," a Canadian Santa commented, adding that children's wishes showed there was hope for the world. "Once two years passed in a row without anybody asking for a toy gun," he said.

San Francisco

The 17th annual Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest for composing bad opening sentences to imaginary novels has been won by Bob Perry, a corporate lawyer. His entry ran: "The corpse exuded the irresistible aroma of a piquant, ancho chili glaze enticingly enhanced with a hint of fresh cilantro as it lay before him, coyly garnished by a garland of variegated radicchio and caramelised onions, and impishly drizzled with glistening rivulets of vintage balsamic vinegar and roast-

ed garlic oil; yes, as he surveyed the body of the slain food critic slumped on the floor of the cozy (sic), but nearly empty bistro, a quick inventory of his senses told corpulent Inspector Moreau that this was, in all likelihood, an inside job."

The contest is named in honour of Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, a 19th century novelist whose book *Paul Clifford* begins: "It was a dark and stormy night."

SEX

Iran

A court in Tehran indicated that it will soon free on bail a German who is on trial for having sex with a local woman. The court said it would view "in a positive light" the man's plea that he had converted to Islam before he had sex with the woman. At

an earlier trial, before that fact had come to light, he had been sentenced to death.

Los Angeles

Two alleged 18-year-olds who had indicated that they would lose their virginity on the Internet with the world watching have admitted that their names are not Mike and Diane as claimed, they are not 18, they are not virgins, and they had no plans to have sex together. But they said that their motives were pure.

Toronto

Terri Jean Bedford, also known as Madame de Sade, opened her defence on charges of offering sex for money by claiming that she was offering no more than escapism recreation. "If I put you on a roller-coaster blindfolded and naked,

you'd get the same pleasure," she told journalists who were reporting the trial.

MARRIAGE

Santa Fe

"I knew something was up, but not murder," Robert Sumner told a New Mexico television station after police informed him that his wife had offered an undercover agent \$750 to have him killed. Sumner said that his marriage had been through some rough times and said that his suspicions had been aroused when his wife started treating him well and fixing him dinner.

Germany

"There are considerable questions about designating the basket of a hot-air balloon as an official state

office," a spokesman for the registry at northern Brandenburg state explained, after his office had removed permission for Germany's first wedding in a hot-air balloon to take place.

CRIME

Dubai

Brigadier Abbas Ali, the chief of Dubai's prison service, announced that inmates serving sentences for fraud or other financial crimes will soon be able to run their businesses from their cells, with the back-up of secretarial services and a state-of-the-art business centre. He told Reuters there was no reason that a businessman serving a prison sentence should be cut off from his legal business and run the risk of incurring financial losses.

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

IN THE great days of the Soviet chess empire, the place to look if you wanted to find the most exhilarating new ideas was in the bulletins of the semi-finals of the USSR championships. While the finals contained games of the highest class among many of the world's best players, the semi-finals produced uninhibited battles among well-trained and hungry masters and grandmasters desperately trying to accumulate the huge scores needed to qualify for places in the final.

Through this system a string of unknown Russians emerged to win tournaments in the West. With their tactical skills and competitive edge honed on the bloodthirsty competition of Soviet championship preliminaries, they had no trouble with the refined caution and technique of Western grandmasters. As the Soviet Empire declined and fell, however, the chess organisation stuttered. Teams from the ex-Soviet republics did well in the Chess Olympics, as they continued to demonstrate their old made-in-the-USSR skills, but the structure that produced them seemed to be crumbling. There were no more proper all-star Russian championships, and no more semi-finals.

As usual, however, predictions of a crumbling of Russian dominance are already looking over-optimistic, for out of the ashes of the old Soviet chess empire new structures are emerging, just as competitive and just as full of talent and ideas as be-

fore. Perhaps, with the new capitalist mentality, when top players are no longer in receipt of a state stipend the desire to win is ever greater than before. Just look at this game from the "White Nights" tournament in St Petersburg this month. It's a bloodthirsty battle as you could hope to meet.

The opening as far as 15.Kh1 is normal enough, with White preparing to meet 15...0-0 with 16.Nxg7. Kxg7 17.Bh6+, but Kruppa's 15...0-0-0 puts a new complexion on the position. After 16...Be5, Black's game looks lucky to be holding itself together, but with 17...Bc6 his counter-attack took form.

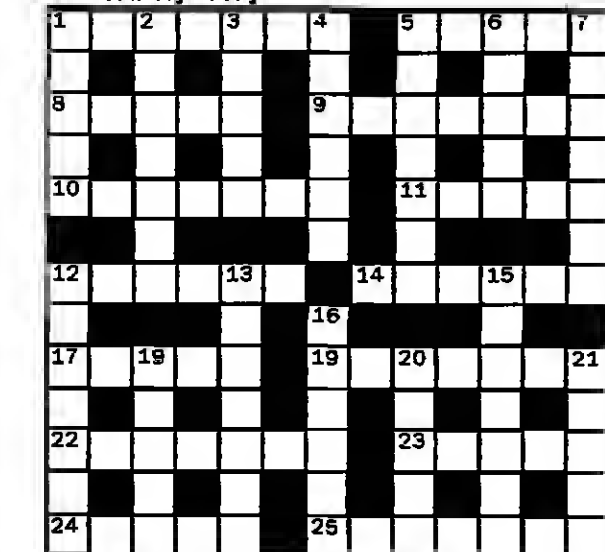
White met this with an imaginative queen sacrifice. After 21.Nxe6 fxe6 22.Bxe6+ Bd7 23.Rc3+ White wins. But Petrov countered calmly with 21...Rhg8 and soon showed that his own attack was the stronger.

White: A Petrov
Black: Y Kruppa
French Defence

1 e4 e6 17 Bg5 Bc6
2 d4 d5 18 Bxf6 Bxf3
3 Nf3 c5 19 Bxe5 Qb6
4 exd5 Qxd5 20 Re3 Bc6
5 Ng5 cxd4 21 Nxe6 Rhg8
6 Bc4 Qd6 22 Nxg8 Bxg2+
7 0-0 Nf6 23 Egi Qh6
8 Nb3 Nc6 24 Bf2 Bc6+
9 Nbx4 Nxd4 25 Kf1 Rxd8
10 Nxd4 a6 26 Bg1 Qh5
11 Re1 Qc7 27 Rae1 Qb5+
12 Bb3 Bd7 28 c4 Qd5
13 Qf3 Bd6 29 Bc2 Rb2
14 Nf5 Bxh2+ 30 R1e2 Rxc2
15 Kh1 0-0-0 White resigns
16 Nxg7 Be5

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3672 Saturday 25 July



ACROSS

- 1 Land (7)
- 5 Ice-sheets (5)
- 8 Fit out (5)
- 9 Soften (7)
- 10 Cut-out design (7)
- 11 Perfect (5)
- 12 Eerie (6)
- 14 Marksman firing from cover (6)
- 17 Rare gas (5)
- 19 Fatty (7)
- 22 Lawlessness (7)
- 23 Helmet feather (5)
- 24 Additional (5)
- 25 Akin (7)

DOWN

- 1 Board game (5)
- 2 Stringed instrument (7)
- 3 Theme (5)
- 4 Annual (6)
- 5 Style (7)
- 6 Speak in public (5)
- 7 Of the stars (7)
- 12 Slaughter (7)
- 13 Cure-all (7)
- 15 Manufactured item (7)
- 16 Barrister or solicitor (6)
- 18 Gave people a hand? (5)
- 20 Drive (5)
- 21 Make alterations to (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Lint, 4 Tenors (Listeners), 9 Transit, 10 Undue, 11 Leek, 12 Chatter, 13 Elk, 14 Roof, 15 Lord, 16 Ties, 20 Untruth, 21 Free, 24 Khalid, 25 Macabre, 26 Keeler, 27 Baton, DOWN: 1 Little, 2 Scale, 3 Test, 5 Educable, 6 Oldster, 7 Shears, 8 Stack, 13 Effusive, 15 Outrage, 17 Bunker, 18 Theme, 19 Deceit, 22 Rebut, 23 Scab.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer West	
North	
♠ K Q 10 9 7	
♥ A Q 9 2	
♦ A 5	
♣ Q 2	
West	
♠ 5	
♥ K 3	
♦ K Q J 4	
♠ A K J 8 6 3	
East	
♠ 8 6 4 3 2	
♥ J 5	
♦ 10 8 6	
♠ 10 7 5	
South	
♠ A J	
♥ 10 8 7 6 4	
♦ 9 7 3 2	
♠ 9 4	

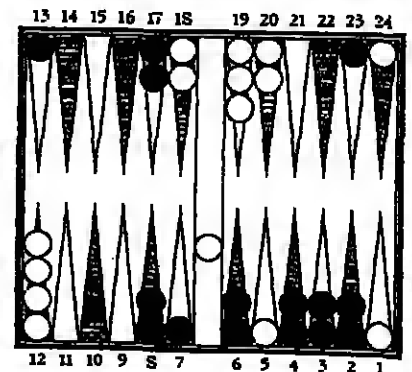
A NEAT false card steered declarer in the wrong direction on this deal, but it would not have succeeded if South had been able to count up to 13! At least, that was dummy's not unfriendly comment at the end.

West opened One Club and North decided to double, risking an unwelcome diamond jump from his partner; rather than simply overcalling. This worked well for, after a pass by East, South responded One Heart. West reversed with Two Diamonds and North (stretching a little) raised his partner to Three Hearts. Not to be outdone in optimism, South bid one for the road and West led ♠ A against Four Hearts.

As you can see, the favourable trump position should have meant an easy 11 tricks, but it did not work out like that. West cashed a second top club and switched to ♠ K. Declarer won on the table, came to hand with ♠ A, and fessed up ♠ Q successfully. So far, so good, but under ♠ Q East dropped his jack. It seemed clear to South that West still held ♠ K 5 and, in an attempt to pick up the king, he tried re-entering his hand with ♠ J. No joy, for West was able to ruff this with his now bare king and cash a diamond for the setting trick.

So what had counting up to 13 got to do with it? Well, West's bidding had shown at least five clubs and four diamonds. If, as South expected, he held three hearts as well, then he held only a singleton spade and the attempt to come back to hand with ♠ J was doomed to failure. If you think about it, the only real chance lay in finding out that East was sufficiently crafty to have dropped ♠ J from a doubleton on the first round of trumps.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



THE BLITZ is one of the easiest types of backgammon to play. You catch your opponent without an anchor in your home board and mercilessly attack him until one of two things happens. Either you will close him out and he will be left with two or three men on the bar, hopelessly watching as you bring home the remainder of your men, bear off and win a gammon. Or he will finally create an anchor in your board and then probably become the favourite, as your position is apt to be weakened by having attempted the blitz.

Computers are good at playing blitzes and human technique has improved by studying their play. In the early stages of a blitz it is important to have at least two of your opponent's men on the bar at each turn. However, as your board gets stronger you have to balance hitting more men with making your board. For example, if you have the choice between hitting another man and making a fifth point in your home board it is nearly always correct to make the point.

In the position above, taken from a low stakes chouette, the team were playing Black and had just rolled 43. How should they continue the blitz? Most of the team members wanted to play 8/5*, 13/9. This is the pure play and prepares to make the 5-pt next roll. One man wanted to play 8/5*/1* hitting both men.

Initially ridiculed, he eventually persuaded his team mates to make his play. A couple of rolls later White was closed out and Black won an easy gammon. The double hit is right here by a large margin. If Black plays 8/5*, 13/9 and White then rolls a 1, he will have a well-timed 1-point position and be a threat until the finish. When playing a blitz go all out to make sure your opponent has little chance to make an anchor.

TRAVEL

Trails of the river bank

Basically there are only three ways a boat can go: forwards, backwards and downwards. Messing about on the Thames became a quietly hazardous habit for Linda Cookson

It is just so easy to get hooked. You begin with the soft option. Next thing you know, you have moved on to the hard stuff. And then you are an addict. Yet it all began so innocently - a couple of Saturdays of harmless fun playing Ratty and Mole in a little phut-phut with an outboard motor. We had chosen the Thames for our adventure in deference to *The Wind in the Willows*. And in a matter of hours we were as spellbound as Mole - dizzily clapping our forepaws and gasping "oh my!". The river (or "The River", as Ratty insists) had worked its magic.

It will sound hindingly obvious to a boatie, but it is still something that had never occurred to us: to travel through the countryside on a river is to become part of a totally different world. For one thing, it is a complete reversal of the land-bound perspectives of journeying.

Town buildings, roads, railways - all the things that would normally be integral to landscape - have vanished. You enter a tranquil hinter-world, consisting of sky, the river winding before you, the river banks, the towpaths and the occasional lock.

Your viewpoint has changed, too. Instead of looking down on the water as a spectator, you are experiencing the river from below the level of the river bank. To all intents and purposes, you have turned into a duck. You are eye-ball to eyeball with kingfishers, moorhens, dabchicks and dragonflies.

And the vegetation - the reeds, the tangled water weed, the willows, the tree roots floating like shiny water snakes - are not simply decorative but are absolutely a part of your existence. The other thing different is time. It

is impossible to rush, on the river. Travelling faster than a brisk walking pace is prohibited by law - the resultant wash would damage the river bank. Activity time expands accordingly, either for the leisurely undertaking of nautical chores such as rope-coiling and preparing for mooring, or for more hedonistic pursuits - opening picnic hampers and uncorking chilled wine come readily to mind.

This slowness of pace brings other special pleasures. It is impossible to do everything at once. So, whatever your normal inclination, you have to take your pleasures one at a time.

Abingdon, near Oxford, is a good starting-place for a day trip. You can meander upstream to Oxford, passing through pretty locks at Sandford and Ilfley. Or you can head downstream through Culham and Clifton locks.

This is a particularly satisfactory route for pub-goers (and boating, as any enthusiast will tell you, is thirsty work). You can navigate down a slipstream overhung with willows to the Plough at Long Wittenham, or continue to the lovely little village of Clifton Hampden (pretty bridge, church, meadow).

There you can sup a pint or two in the garden of the famous 14th-century Barley Mow Inn, where Jerome K Jerome wrote part of *Three Men in a Boat*. Venture a little further down to Day's Lock (host of the annual Pooh Sticks World Championship) and you can moor for a visit to historic Dorchester-on-Thames (plenty of pubs, and an abbey to boot).

For a longer trip, Benson - two miles upstream from Wallingford - is the place to start from. This is where we first moved on to the hard stuff and hired a proper cruiser for the week-

end. (Tip: unless of diminutive proportions or content to sleep under a table, hire a cruiser that is advertised as having twice the number of berths you really need.)

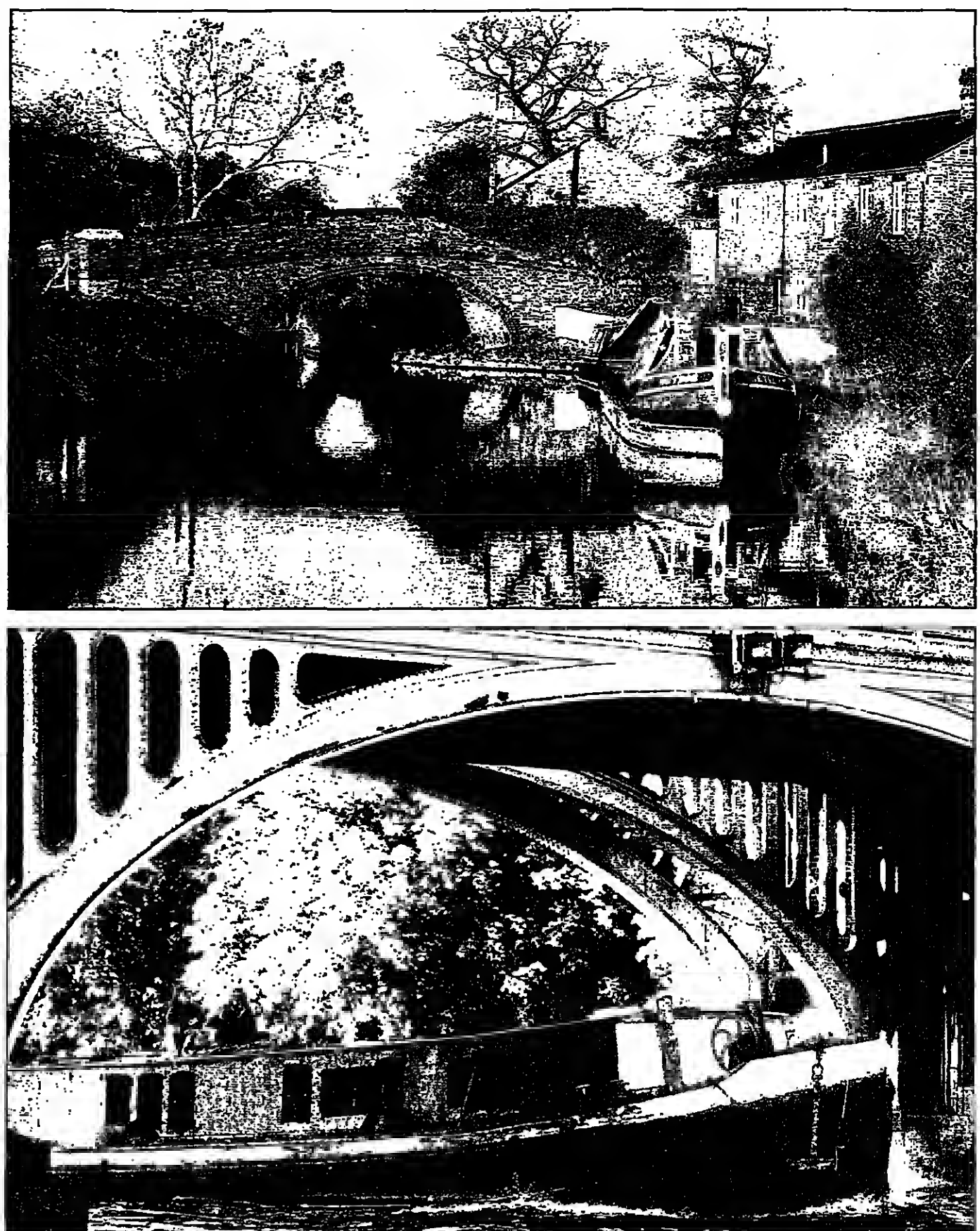
Heading downstream from Benson towards Goring - which is the longest stretch of the Thames that is free of locks - takes you through a steeply wooded landscape very different from further upstream.

Goring is an ideal stopping-point, with free overnight mooring on its tow-path. The village is attractive, with a silvery weir and flint-and-timber-framed shops and cottages. For thirsty boaters, there are two good pubs conveniently close to the tow-path, the Catherine Wheel and the John Barleycorn Inn.

As we learnt in the nicest way possible, river-users are forgiving folk and lock-keepers are the most patient of people. Basically, there are only three ways to go on a boat - forwards, backwards and downwards. To our amazement, we avoided the last with some ease. Rivers themselves may not be idiot proof, but even idiots - with a bit of luck - can stay afloat.

Practise the round turn with two half hitches, remember to drive on the right, and you're away.

For short-term boat and cruiser hire, contact Kingcraft at Abingdon on 01235 521125 or Benson Pleasurecraft on 01491 838304. Alternatively you can ring the Thames Hire Cruiser Association, which has 16 member boat yards in the region (01965 380107). For longer boating holidays on the Thames ring Hoseasons on 01502 501010 or New Horizon on 01692 582277. Both offer holidays starting from Benson.



Life moves at a leisurely pace on the river - travelling faster than walking pace is prohibited by law David Hughes/MSI

Chuff your way into a time capsule

IT WAS a time of bereavement on the railway and, to mark the occasion, the trains had been decked with black ribbon. The gesture was a final tribute to a man who had died that day after seven years as cleaner of the station toilets. But then William Williams, aged 77, was no ordinary cleaner of toilets, nor did he work for an ordinary railway: he was a former recipient of the local tourist board's Loo of the Year Award which he won in the service of the Talylyn Railway, one of the great little railways of Wales.

The principality's surviving narrow-gauge steam railways, ranging from the Brecon Mountain Railway in the south to the Llanberis Lake Railway in the north, provide that personal touch long missing from main-line services.

It may explain why more than 500,000 passengers a year choose to travel in cramped, rickety carriages hauled at a maximum 15mph by tiny, asthmatic steam engines that were working when Victoria was a comparatively young monarch.

To appreciate the appeal fully, you must understand that the actual journey is the most important part; its completion is merely incidental. The former is guaranteed while the latter is only highly probable. In any case, a successful completion means the fun is over.

Second, the locomotives are not machines. With names such as Maid Marian, Douglas and (inevitably) Owain Glendower, they are living entities who strut jauntily in their gleaming paintwork and burnished brass. They playfully blow soot into their passengers' eyes and whistle at each other, local farmers and the sheep that scatter in trackside fields.

The rich Welsh tradition of narrow-gauge steam trains is an accident of history. When mountainside deposits of slate, coal and lead were exploited in the mid 19th century, the cheapest way of transporting the

See Wales by steam. Christopher Mowbray did when he caught a locomotive back to the early Victorian world of narrow-gauge railways



Tradition and beauty - the Welsh steam railways David Ashdown

THE GREAT LITTLE TRAINS OF WALES

BALA LAKE Railway runs for four-and-a-half miles along the lake between Bala and Llanuwchllyn. Meanwhile the Brecon Mountain Railway chugs its way along the full length of Taf Fechan Reservoir near Merthyr Tydfil. More water is on view on the Llanberis Lake Railway which has a three-mile track along the lakeside.

For a longer journey take Talylyn Railway, which runs for seven-and-a-half miles between Tywyn and Nant Gwernol. Or try the Vale of Rheidol Railway which steams along for 12 miles between Aberystwyth and Devil's Bridge, or the Ffestiniog Railway (13.5 miles from Porthmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog). By contrast, the Welsh Highland Railway offers a one-mile trip from Porthmadog, although there are plans for expansion. Finally, the Welshpool & Llanfair Railway runs for more than seven miles between the two towns.

A Great Little Trains of Wales Wanderer ticket costs £38 (half price for children aged five to 15) and offers unlimited travel on the eight leading narrow-gauge railways on any eight days within a 15-day period. (The Snowdon Mountain Railway is not a member of the Great Little Trains scheme.) Identical facilities are offered for £28 on any four days within an eight-day period. Individual return fares range from £2 to £12.80 depending on the journey. All railways are open from spring to autumn and several have carriages that can take wheelchairs.

material to England was to build short railways to the coast and complete the journey by sea. As the quarries and mines became worked out, volunteer steam enthusiasts moved in to ensure the railways stayed.

What has been saved is a network of mobile vanlage points from which to view some of Britain's most stunning scenery. Only ramblers can reach the same spots, but they have to walk all day to do so.

Volunteers travel from all over the country to work alongside paid staff on most of the lines. It is not uncommon to find a dentist driving a train aided by a business consultant as fireman and a teacher as guard.

David Leech is traffic manager of the Talylyn, which was the first railway in the world to be rescued by a preservation society and is still using the same engines and rolling stock as when it started in 1865. He said: "Relying on volunteers is the only way we can survive."

Why do they do it? Elizabeth Barker, a company secretary from Yorkshire who spends about 40 days a year working with her husband, David, on the Welshpool and Llanfair Railway, tried to explain: "My husband gets so much pleasure out of being a fireman and so, while he shovels coal, I help to run the tea room. The teas are very important because the profit we make from them keeps the trains on the track."

Dave Dilnot, a Shropshire policeman, expressed similar contentment with the 20 days a year he spends as engine driver, fireman or general maintenance worker on the Bala Lake Railway: "It is so relaxing after having to deal with awkward people in my job."

The volunteers have also preserved an idiosyncratic time capsule. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the Vale of Rheidol Railway as it leaves Aberystwyth to start the spectacular climb to Devil's Bridge. On the edge of the town, the

train has to halt at an ungated level crossing while the fireman and guard get out to hold up the traffic with red lollipop signs saying "STOP". As the train pulls over the crossing, inconvenienced motorists wave and smile rather than drumming their fingers impatiently.

Similar scenes are repeated throughout the Welsh narrow-gauge world. Railway timetables exhort passengers to wave the train down at wayside halts when they want to get on. Stations are sometimes no more than a sign alongside the track

next to a gate in the hedge. Crack expresses have names such as The Quarryman and it costs as little as £1 extra to convert your ticket to first class.

Then there is an absence of bustle. With the possible exception of the world-famous Ffestiniog Railway, which provides links with mainline services, it does not appear hugely problematic if a train is a few minutes late. Most passengers are tourists or hikers, although the Llanberis Lake Railway sometimes delivers cable repairs to a remote power

station and the Talylyn has one genuine commuter.

But the most powerful thing about these trains is that they bring together total strangers who are suddenly strangers no more. This was perfectly encapsulated by an incident that occurred as the 11.50 from Bala to Llanuwchllyn trudged along the lakeside. Far out across the sun-glinted water, a sailboarder risked his equilibrium to wave at the train and a passenger who returned the greeting remarked: "So there is still some humanity in modern life."

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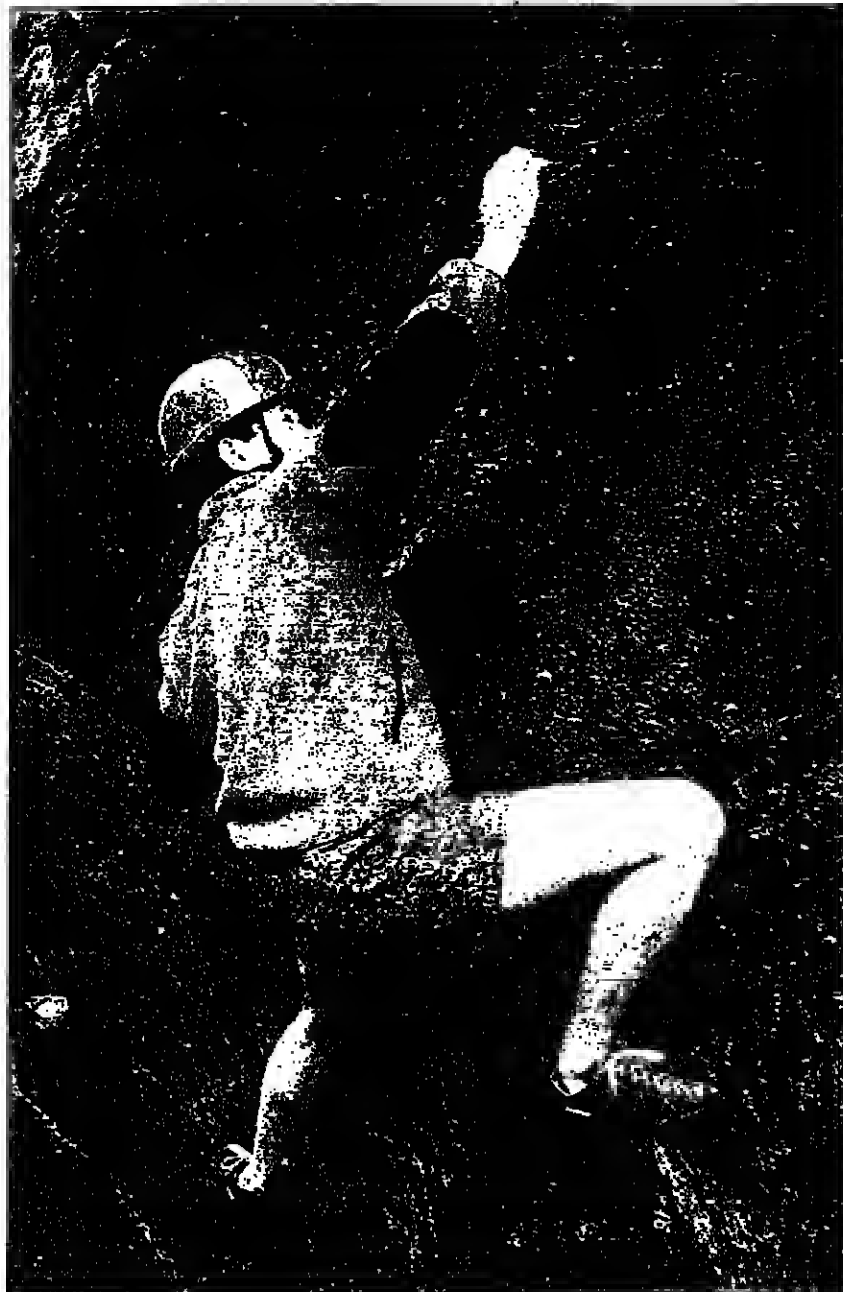
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Bouldering is the perfect low-level introduction to the essence of rock climbing. By Eric Kendall



Fluent climbers make bouldering look like a slow-motion vertical ballet but, for beginners, hanging on for dear life is nearer the mark

Penny Kendall

Climbing for vertigo sufferers

Taut against the rock, wanting to merge with it, smeared across its cold surface, you search for another hold. Your grip – only tenuous to start with – starts to slip with your ebbing strength. “Will you won’t you fall?” becomes a simple matter of “When will you fall?” And there is no rope, no safety net, no comforting web of harness and hardware. First it is heart-pounding, then simply heart-stopping when strength or skill finally fails, and you plunge earthwards. You hit the ground with a soft, rather than a sickening, thud. Well, it was only 18in below you. But it makes little difference until the last moment; while you are up there, you fight every inch of the way to stay on. Besides, within the last 10 minutes you had momentarily reached

the giddy height of about 3ft 6in above sea level. This is life on the edge, just not a very high one.

But that is fine because when bouldering, height is all but irrelevant. This is not beginner’s stuff, it is everybody’s stuff: the perfect training ground for all climbers. For some purists, it is the ultimate challenge. At first glance it can be hard to see why, but this is the most “inner” form of climbing that exists, the chance to tackle and possibly solve a series of rock conundrums and find out a lot about your abilities. From the moment you scan a broad slab of rock, looking hard just to spot a hold to help you on board, it is utterly absorbing. The next move (and at a higher mental level, one or more after that) is all that matters: chess springs to mind as a comparison, though it rarely takes place upside down, nor do you normally dust your

fingers with chalk for extra grip before making a move.

Safety issues, so central to climbing and mountaineering, are taken care of by never going high enough to present a serious risk, or by having someone below, “spotting”, with hands outstretched to catch and steady you or at least to break your fall. The pay-off in terms of freedom and the opportunity to push to the limit and beyond can bring your climbing technique and confidence on by leaps and bounds. But despite the built-in security it can still feel as desperate as the moment, high up on a roped climb, when you know you are going to lose it despite pushing finger tips, tendons and muscles way beyond pain to try to hang in there. It is just these moments that bouldering imitates relentlessly, training the mind as much as the body to stay on an even keel.

Fluent climbers make bouldering look like a slow-motion vertical ballet, with rhythmic, repetitive build-ups to a move, practising contorted manoeuvres and turning them into smooth, natural actions, switching feet on tiny ledges, swapping hand-holds, and using momentary up-weighting to transfer body position. Easier ground can be covered at higher speeds to develop sinuous, supple movement; instead of gaining height, you can just go sideways. Overhangs – the hardest climbing problem – are still hard even when they are in the tight space between the ground and the gently curving underside of a large boulder. Fear of falling may well be substituted by the less realistic but even more horrible thought of being crushed as your weight pulls several tons of finely balanced granite on top of you.

When you watch experts at play,

it looks like a game that defies the laws of physics and biology. The shakes, tremors, pain, and exhaustion followed by total physical relief that flow through you as you jump off or fall, do not seem to be suffered by gnarly rock athletes who restore vice-like power to their fingers with a characteristic wriggle of the lower arms as if shaking off water. Their minds, too, would appear to be differently developed from most, with the ability to visualise intricate aspects of an apparently blank piece of rock, even when they are nowhere near it: if it defeated them last time and possibly 100 times before that, then at least they know their enemy and may one day prevail.

For the rest of us, this is definitely the way to get our climbing off the ground, remembering that those physical inches on the rock face are mental milestones.

Where to boulder: If there is one thing that can put you off climbing more than vertigo, it is an aversion to tying knots and fiddling about with safety gear. Non-sailing, non-scouting types can find the pressure of yet another mind-bogglingly dextrous rope trick far harder to deal with than the real issue at hand – inching up vertical rock – and getting up into high mountains is not on everyone’s wish list, either. Bouldering is the ideal antidote to all this, and a perfect introduction to the essence of climbing.

Natural bouldering opportunities tend to be near the valley floor in established climbing regions. Climbing walls often have specific areas for unroped climbing, usually with crash mats below. Much of Britain’s coastline also has a lot of usable rock when the tide is right. Contact Jim Thompson on 01271 322955 to

arrange instruction on the north Devon coast. Further afield, Fontainebleau, near Paris, has unrivalled sandstone boulders.

Though it is an instinctive activity, with no real safety issues to worry about, getting advice from experienced climbers on technique, as well as where to go, is invaluable. Try local climbing clubs or instructors. About 200 artificial climbing walls are listed in the British Mountaineering Council’s *Climbing Wall Directory* which costs £2.50 but is free to members. Write to the BMC, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester M20 2BB, enclosing an a.s.c. for membership information. Touching Stone is a climbing course for transferring skills from climbing wall to crag, and it includes some bouldering. Contact Plas y Brenin, the National Mountain Centre (01690 720214), web site www.pyb.co.uk for details.

DON'T MISS TOMORROW'S...

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

TRAVEL



SUMMER IN THE NETHERLANDS

Take a short break in The Hague, city with a beach, or go for a muddy walk across the Wadden sea

YOUR PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HOLIDAYS

The strange draw of pencils

Would-be artist Jon Winter found himself unexpectedly riveted by a Lakeland museum

DEWY GRASS. May green 43. Varished wooden hulls, golden brown 59. The subtle bluish of morning sun on water, pink madder lake 17...

Spend a few days sketching in the Lake District and you begin to see the world differently. In an effort to recreate the living landscape on a blank page, you reduce it to a pattern of light and shade rendered with the range of colours in your pencil case.

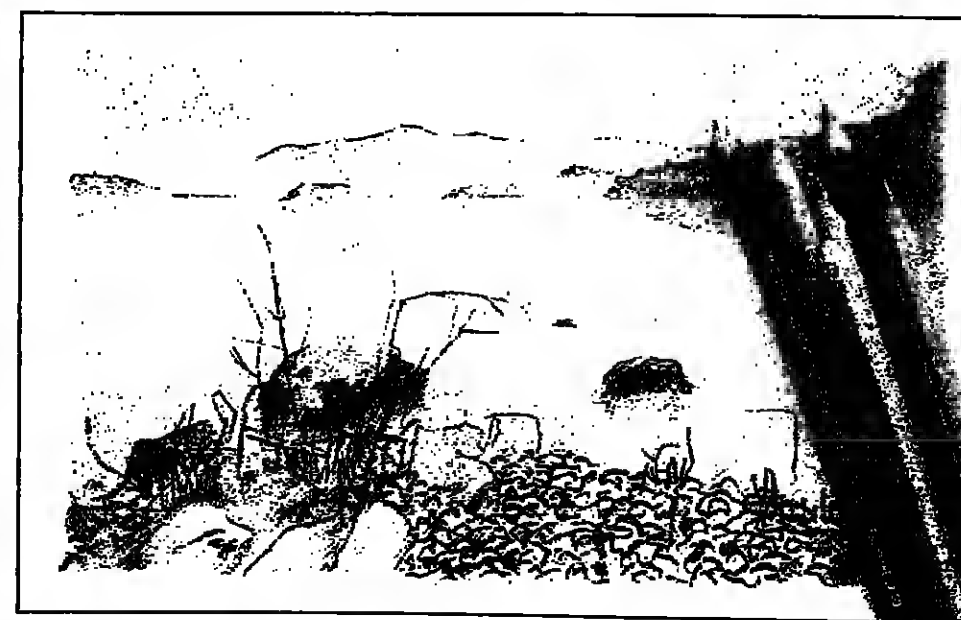
The effect of this new vision is extraordinary: suddenly everything becomes fascinating, no matter how unremarkable. A dead fern (somewhere between terracotta 64 and spectrum orange 11) against the dark, soggy mulch of a forest floor seems a worthy subject; the subtle green and blue hues and dimple texture of the stones at the edge of a lake merit closer scrutiny.

With so much subject matter in such picturesque surroundings it is difficult to know where to begin. So, before you put pencil to paper, it is worth paying a quick visit to the Cumberland Pencil Museum in Keswick.

A museum dedicated to the finer points of pencil production may not sound riveting, but there are other reasons to visit. Budding artists will find the video demonstrating drawing technique invaluable.

And there is the museum shop where you can equip yourself with everything you need for a day's sketching, from a humble HB to a full set of 120 coloured pencils in a presentation case.

About 450 years ago artists had less choice. Graphite, the raw material at the core of a pencil, had recently been dis-



covered at a mine in Borrowdale, near Keswick. Most of it went into producing cannon balls, but a cottage industry flourished, sticking the leftover scraps into grooved pieces of wood. So good were the drawing qualities of Borrowdale graphite that, by 1580, pupils at the school of the late Michelangelo were using pencils made in Cumberland bought from Flemish traders.

From then on the story of the pencil is a straightforward tale of good business, leading to the formation of the Cumberland Pencil Company in 1832 and on to modern-day manufacture capable of producing 2 million pencils a week. Manufacturing techniques

have advanced but the method has hardly changed. They still insert graphite into a grooved piece of wood, only now the graphite comes mainly from the Far East and is mixed in precise ratios with wax, clay and gum to create 20 subtle drawing characteristics, from the fine, scratchy 9H to the soft and smudgy 9B.

I walked out of the museum clutching a starter pack of 12 coloured pencils, an A4 sketch pad and an assortment of individual colours carefully matched to those I had seen in the surrounding landscape.

After a 10-minute walk I was looking across Derwent Water from the slipway at the end of Lake Road. The view had the

potential – a cluster of up-turned rowing boats in the foreground, mist draped around a tree-covered island in the lake and the soft shapes of mountains forming the horizon line. In fact, whichever way I looked there seemed to be a picture waiting to be drawn. So I set off round the edge of the lake to look at other possibilities, stopping every so often to make a quick study of a detail that caught my eye. Flakes of lichen, turquoise blue 39, growing on a fallen branch; the diagonal, hatched texture of a slate wall.

There are many creative devices to help you translate what you see on to paper. You can use just colour as a means of giv-

ing form and shape to a subject, apply a purely linear method, or use loose patterns of dots, strokes or cross-hatching to create the illusion. Even the way you sharpen and hold a pencil can further add to your artistic vocabulary.

About half-way round the lake I settled on a classic lakeland scene looking out from a small peninsula that vanished into a near-perfect reflection of a pale sky hemmed in by rolling hills. I began with a few quick sketches, trying out colour mixes and hatching techniques, but then every time I started on a more detailed study the drawing became laboured and fussy, losing the spontaneity of the earlier sketches.

As the day wore on and my pencils wore down, I did not notice the light gradually fading. After turning to yet another clean page I looked back at the scene and realised that the colours had changed to a palette of cool blues. The sky had filled in and where there had been copper beech 61 and olive green 51 in the hillsides, now there were hazy shades of blue, a dark violet and a French grey. I started again.

What turned out to be my best effort of the day (see picture) had to be finished off from memory after the light had finally faded, leaving me to wander back into Keswick under the night sky – which, if you are sketching in the Lake District, is somewhere between indigo 36 and ivory black 67.

The Cumberland Pencil Museum, Keswick (017687 73626), open all year round 9.30am-4pm. Admission: adults £2; children £1; family ticket £4.50

Germany's wurst hangover

When it comes to the more earthly delights, the enormous scale of Munich's Oktoberfest overwhelms the senses.

Richard Warren reports



The statistics are awesome. Six million litres of beer; 400,000 pork sausages; 600,000 grilled chickens; 24 roasted oxen. These figures illustrate the conspicuous consumption of the five million debauchees who visit the Munich Oktoberfest each year. Even more telling are the statistics that show what happens once these hearty mountains and beer lakes have been consumed. The Oktoberfest has its roots in the celebration of the marriage of Crown Prince Ludwig (later Ludwig I) of Bavaria to Princess Therese von Sachsen-Hildburghausen in 1810. So delighted were the people of Munich with the party that they decided to hold one every year. Despite its name, most of the festival takes place in September, ending on the first weekend of October. So now is the time to start planning a visit to this great beer fest.

At last year's Oktoberfest, 1,800 sets of keys, one dog, one wife, several sets of false teeth, one insulin injection kit and a pair of trousers with 15,000 German marks stashed in the back pocket were lost by drunken revellers at this, the biggest beer and folk festival in the world. Four people work full time throughout the 16-day event in the lost property office storing, labelling and handing back coats, wallets, hats, jumpers, scarves, gloves, cameras, rucksacks, passports, bags and mobile phones to their owners.

The lost property office was also a good place to find some clues about what types of people go to Oktoberfest. Dressed in lederhosen, like

many of his fellow Bavarians at the festival, Mr Deichstatter, volunteer manager of the lost property office for the past 15 years, has a few telling words about some of the foreign visitors. Although the Germans are the biggest festival goers, they are by no means the worst for losing their belongings. "The Australians and the New Zealanders are the worst when they are drunk. The Italians are the worst when they are sober," he says.

The Antipodeans have built up a distinctive reputation. They descend in thousands on the Hofbräuhaus-Festhalle, one of seven huge beer halls that are the event's focus. In 1997, there were 14 beer food and wine tents on the 31-hectare site.

Like the other tents, the Hofbräuhaus-Festhalle has a capacity of up to 10,000 people who can sit at wooden trestle tables and benches



Getting down to some serious drinking in full costume, left, while a Bavarian oompah band, above, jolies everyone along

Pierre Adenis/Rex Features

'The Australians and the New Zealanders are the worst when they are drunk. The Italians are the worst when they are sober'

found both inside and outside the tent. From a stage in the centre, a Bavarian oompah band, with all the musicians dressed in lederhosen, jolies everyone along in alcoholic oblivion by playing local folk favourites and international hits.

Festival organisers call the Hofbräuhaus Festhalle the "problem tent". It is not just the singing, the shouting, the sweating and the vomiting that astonish the Munich locals;

the fighting and the public sex grab their attention as well. Elsewhere, the festival is less riotous, though equally drunken. I spent a night at the Schottenhamel-Festhalle where the crowd was overwhelmingly German, mostly young, and at least one-third female.

The atmosphere here, as in the other tents, was more relaxed compared to the riot of the Hofbräuhaus

dinner plates and grilled chicken; drank beer with middle-aged New Yorkers; and took countless photographs in beer focus. I chinked steins with an endless stream of people I have never met before - and would never meet again - as if they were long-lost friends. I bought red roses from an under-dressed flower seller, and handed them straight back in the mindless spirit of amorous bonhomie that such events inspire. And then I eventually stumbled home on a full tank, before I could do any further damage to my reputation. But not without consuming one of the steaming-hot puddings at the Kafers Weinschenke tent first. That was a treat not to be missed. The food tents are run by Munich's best restaurants, whose servings are big in both quantity and quality.

Outside the mayhem of the beer and food tents, the funfair, which covers half of the festival grounds and operates from morning till night, occupied the attention of the thousands of children brought to Oktoberfest by their parents, and a good many adults as well.

In keeping with the tradition of the Oktoberfest being a community event, many of the funfair's old-

fashioned Bavarian entertainments stalls are run by volunteers. They take time off from their ordinary jobs to juggle, whistle bird tunes, ring-master a flea circus, and, in the case of one man, dance about on tables dressed in a chicken outfit.

New and more commercially minded innovations include coffee shops and in-line skating rinks. And, of course, there were all the usual stomach-churning, head-spinning rides and big wheels you would expect to find at the fair.

But the unsung heroes who make Oktoberfest possible are the waitresses. Mostly dressed in wide black skirts and white aprons, they will carry up to nine one-litre steins of beer at once, with the ninth glass balanced on top of the others. From 11am to 11pm, they muscle their way through falling crowds of drinkers to deliver their orders.

All the beer is made by Munich breweries, which produce extra-strong festival brews for the occasion. Serious drinkers say you are unlikely to get a hangover, because all the beers are made only out of yeast, hops and water. It did give me a hangover - but I am glad it was a healthy one.

FACT FILE

Getting to Munich: British Airways (0345 222111) flies daily from Heathrow, Gatwick and Birmingham to Munich; Lufthansa (0345 737747) flies from Heathrow, Birmingham and Manchester; and Debonair (0541 500300) from Luton. The latter has flights on offer for £11.40 return including tax.

Getting to Paderborn: the most convenient airport is Düsseldorf. Paderborn is reached in two hours from Düsseldorf's main station. The German Travel Centre (0181 429 2900) is offering a fare of £90 return from Gatwick on British Airways; there are also non-stop flights from Birmingham, Guernsey, Heathrow, Manchester, Newcastle and Stansted. German Rail/Deutsche Bahn has just moved back to central London; its new address and phone number is 18 Conduit

Street, London W1R 9TD (0171 317 0919).

Getting information: the German National Tourist Office (PO Box 2695, London W1A 9TN 0171 317 0908). The line is open 10am-noon and 2pm-4pm from Monday to Friday.



A costume drama all for the sake of one saint

It was the feast day of St Liborius when we arrived at Paderborn, a town in West Germany. He was clearly very important - the place was crammed.

This was the first day of Libori-Fest, a nine-day extravaganza of celebration, and our German friend led us straight into the thick of it: we would just be in time for the procession of the shrine that contained the saint's relics. Outside the 13th-century cathedral, whose bells were pealing with mind-numbing intensity, tourists strained to see the purple-robed bishops and arch-

bishops making their way inside. Each year they turn out in force from far and wide to mark the day when the remains of this former bishop were brought over from Le Mans in the year AD836.

Inside, people stood on pillars and pews, even in the pulpit, to get a better view of the golden casket progressing solemnly down the nave.

It was borne by the "Liboriguard" - who are members of Paderborn's elite families - resplendent in floor-length robes heavy with gold trimmings. We caught glimpses of a glided cross and a great fan of peacock feathers. The church

St Liborius arrived in Paderborn in AD836 and the town has been celebrating in great style ever since. By Hilary Macaskill

dignitaries were swallowed up by the jostling crowd, which was kept in order by men wearing dark green hats adorned with feathers: members, our German friend said, of a shooting brotherhood.

The Catholicism of Paderborn was evident at every turn. There were shops with window displays of vestments in jewel-like colours; stalls in the market were devoted to religious carvings of serene Madonnas and jolly friars. Outside the

Franciscan monastery, in one of the busiest shopping streets, two young monks were making and selling waffles at a great pace. And everywhere there were priests and nuns on holiday: two nuns buying ice-cream, another lingering at a market stall displaying lacy lingerie; a pair of priests strolling through the square, chatting and clutching beer tankards.

In the main square, under the imposing facade of the Je-

suit church, also home to a theological college, a beer festival was in full swing. The beer used to be free; no longer, alas, but there was plenty of other free entertainment - marching bands, street performers, banners, and the inevitable speech from the mayor, followed by a mass hand-out of balloons shaped like ducks and bears to all the children.

Paderborn gets its name from its position at the source

of the river Pader - surely, at only four kilometres long, the tiniest river in Europe. Warm springs can be seen in a park close to the cathedral, 20 of them in all (though some barely raise a bubble). They appealed to the Emperor Charlemagne, however, and he established a royal seat that became a base for his parliament and his campaigns. When Pope Leo visited him here in 799, Paderborn's religious importance was assured.

Here, fittingly, is the oldest hall-type church in Germany, the chapel of St Bartholomew, built to be used by royalty in 1017.

The later, medieval, architecture of the city is striking, too; it includes a magnificent gabled town hall with a multi-windowed facade, and Adam-and-Eve House, so called because of the carved and painted figures depicting the expulsion from paradise, which was built in the 15th century and now houses a museum. Everywhere, religion makes its presence felt, however obliquely: for example in the antiquarian bookshop in Schulstrasse, so

welcoming of browsers that sofas are provided.

But during the nine days of the Libori festival at the end of July, the secular and the religious combine, with services, processions, plays, jazz and pop concerts, exhibitions - and, needless to say, Libori T-shirts. There is even Liboribrot: special loaves made just for this festival. Body and soul could not be better catered for than in Paderborn.

Libori takes place from 25 July to 2 August. Tourist information is available at Marienplatz 2a, 33098 Paderborn (00 49 5251 882980).

GREEN CHANNEL

IF YOU have ever been impressed by a place on your travels, or the green credentials of a company or project, now is the time to shout about it. The British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards are given annually to organisations or projects worldwide that are making strides to minimise their environmental impact or to support local communities.

This year they are asking the public to get involved by encouraging them to enter their favourite environmental tourism projects. If you have travelled with a tour operator who you think showed special commitment to green issues, if you've stayed at an environmentally friendly hotel, then contact British Airways and get them to send your nomination the entry forms.

The awards are given to organisations in five regions: Pacific, Southern America, Europe and the UK. There are also special awards for the mass tourism sectors, including long haul and European projects, and a new award by the World Conservation Union for the best entry from a national park or protected area.

The entrants are judged by a panel of tourism and environment experts, chaired by Professor David Bellamy. The final entry date is 1 August. Contact British Airways, Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, Environment Branch, Waterside (HBBG), PO Box 365, Harmondsworth UB7 0GB (0181 738 5816).

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48 hours in Ljubljana

You need a break – and a short-cut to the soul of a city. This week, Clare Thomson heads off for a cultural long weekend in the capital of Slovenia

Why go now?

Good reasons for visiting include the Mediterranean weather, value for money, a well-developed café society and the chance to stroll through one of central Europe's most appealing capitals without being overwhelmed by wannabe Bohemians. Or come for the summer festival, "all mid-August, the Old Town and Zankne, a former monastery converted into an open air theatre, play host to concerts, plays, dance performances and impromptu street entertainment.

Beam down

Ljubljana is not a competitive destination, so do not expect any bargains. Adria Airways (0171-437 0143) flies daily between Heathrow and Ljubljana, whereas British Airways (0445 222 111) flies twice weekly from Gatwick. The lowest return fare to Adria is £262, which must be booked a week in advance and has to include a Saturday night.

Get your bearings

Ljubljana was a key economic centre for the Habsburg empire, with trade routes linking the city to Italy, Hungary and Istanbul. The layout is medieval, but the architecture shows Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque influences. Much of the city was levelled in the 1895 earthquake, paving the way for some Art Nouveau innovation.

There is a good bus network, but the city can be comfortably toured on foot. For a dramatic introduction, climb the winding pebbled path through the park behind the old town to the Grad (castle). Take the vertiginous, wrought-iron Art Nouveau stairway up the lookout tower and admire the terracotta roofs, the pastel-coloured houses and the willow-lined Ljubljanica river.

Check in

As in many former Communist countries, hotels are more expensive than Westerners expect. If you can afford to splash out, stay at the Art Nouveau Grand Hotel Union (Miklosceva 1, tel: 00 386 61 1254133; double room around £90). Ask for a room overlooking Miklosceva street, so you can see the bank with its surreal and colourful Twenties "folk architecture" windows.

The Turist (Dalmatinova 13, tel: 00 386 61 1322343; double room around £40), is more drab, but adequate and well located, while the less centrally located Ilirija (Prekmorskih brigad Trg 4; tel: 00 386 61 1393337; double room around £35) offers a peaceful stay near Trivoli Gardens. If money is tight, try a guest house – gostilna (it will cost

from £10 per person per night) or a private room in an apartment (around £20 per person per night). Or telephone the Ljubljana tourist office on 00 386 61 3061215.

A hike

Begin your stroll at Presernov trg, an Italianate square dominated by the salmon-coloured Baroque Franciscan Church of the Annunciation. Cross Tromostovje (Triple Bridge) for your first encounter with the work of the architect Jozef Plecnik, who left his mark all over Ljubljana.

One of his creations was the colonnaded market, which stretches between Tromostovje and the ornate Dragon Bridge and is adorned with white globe lights and four splendid statues of the mythical beast that is the city's symbol. En route to the cathedral, explore Vodnik square, home to a fruit and vegetable market during the week.

From the cathedral, head for the Baroque town hall. Pause at the Carniolan Rivers fountain, inspired by Bernini's fountain in Rome's Piazza Navona, and continue up the cobbled, bar-lined Mestni trg, which becomes Stari trg. Cross Cevljarski Most (Shoemaker's Bridge), redesigned by Jozef Plecnik in the Twenties.

Visit Kongresni trg, named after the 1821 Congress of the Holy Alliance, held in Ljubljana after Napoleon's defeat. The Corsican conqueror's four-year occupation of the city was a welcome break from Habsburg rule and stimulated the development of Slovenian culture. The Slovenian Philharmonic building is a symbol of a proud



musical heritage: Beethoven, Paganini and Brahms were all honorary Philharmonic members, and Mahler was chief conductor for the 1881-2 season.

Don't miss the unbewn stone and brick exterior or black marble colonnades of Plecnik's University Library, or his graffiti-decorated late masterpiece, Krizanke.

Pass swiftly through the hideous Trg Republike, the city's administrative centre, pausing only to pon-

der at the stark black monument commemorating the city's liberation in 1945. Ljubljana was an active centre of resistance. Mussolini erected a barbed-wire fence around the city, increased terror under the Nazis fuelled Slovenian resistance, but at the cost of thousands of lives.

Head back into town via the Viennese-style opera house, Slovenska Cesta. See the city's first skyscraper, a rather modest Thirties affair, and round off your trip with a visit to Miklosceva Park, an extravagant Art Nouveau park with matching turrets that were designed by Maks Fabiani.

Lunch on the run

Stop for a crusty brown bread sandwich with air-dried Karst ham at Katombe (Stari trg), a stone-floored tavern with wine barrels for tables, high oak benches and a good choice of local wines.

Try the neighbouring Nostalgia if you're more interested in atmosphere than in food (ready-prepared ham and cheese sandwiches). The café is decorated as a Fifties apartment, with mismatched wallpaper and Communist-era film posters.

Cultural afternoon

Complete your Plecnik education with a bus trip (No 20) to Grad Fuzine, built in the 18th century for a wealthy Bavarian family. It now houses the city's Architectural Institute, a cool, roomy museum with a permanent exhibition on Plecnik's work in Ljubljana, Vienna and Prague (Za Studencem, open Monday to Friday, 10am to 2pm).

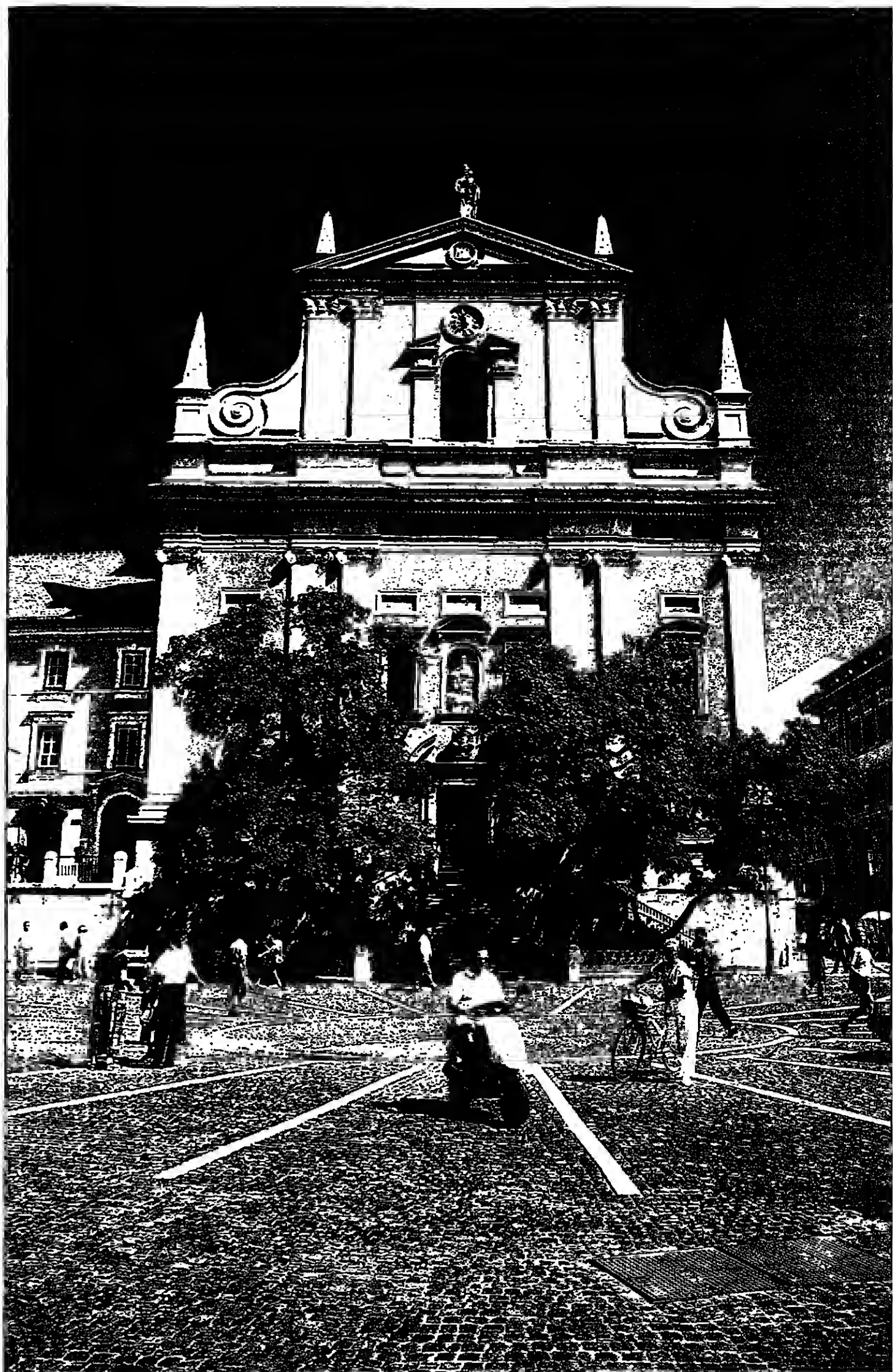
The City Museum (Mestni Muzej), which has a collection of 17th-century views of Ljubljana, is the best introduction to the city's history (15 Gosposka, open Monday to Saturday, 9am to 7pm). Nearer the opera, the Moderna Art Gallery (Moderna Galerija) offers an excellent overview of 20th-century Slovenian art, especially sculpture (14 Tomsiceva, open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 6pm; Sundays, 10am to 1pm).

Liquid culture

Slovenia is famous for its wines: fruity reds from the south west, sweet whites from the north and an international-award-winning, dry Jeruzalem sauvignon from the east. Macek (Cankarjevo nabrežje), one of several bustling riverside cafés, offers various local wine promotions. If beer is more your thing, try the locally produced Union pils or Lasko, brewed in central Slovenia's hop-growing region using pure spring water.

Rustic dinner

The downside to Ljubljana's resistance to mass tourism is that many restaurants close at weekends, when city-dwellers escape to the Alps or the Adriatic. One place that stays open is Sestica (Slovenska 40, tel: 00 386 61 219575), whose menu



Start your city stroll at the colourful Franciscan church in Presernov Square

Phil Robinson/Robert Harding Picture Library

displays the influence of neighbouring Austria and Hungary. Try double buckwheat strudel with cottage cheese, home-made salami, cabbage goulash and roast pork. Less touristy is the Kratochvil Brewery (Koldovorska 14, tel: 00 386 61 1333114), which brews its own wheat beers. Admire the shiny vaults as you feast on venison goulash with dumplings, sauerkraut, garlic soup and smoked meats.

Sunday morning: go to church. Endure the grimaces of local worshippers at the Ursuline Church of the Holy Trinity, with a remarkable, wavy, late-Baroque facade, Palladian columns and a colossal altar by Francesco Robba.

Peeping tourists may not be welcome during Mass, but this seems to be the only time that the church is open, so if you are discreet you can have a look. Have a look too at the

Italianate, gilt-interior cathedral, built by the Jesuit Andrea Pozzo in the 18th century.

Italianate lunch

Back to the river, this time to Ljubljanski dvor Pizzeria (Dvorni trg 1, tel: 00 386 61 2165551). Sit on the terrace and watch the rowing boats go by as you tuck into one of 135 varieties of pizzas. All are freshly prepared and enormous.

Iceing on the cake

For a spot of mountain air, take the train to Kranj, one of Slovenia's oldest towns. Stroll along the medieval high-street past shops decorated with wrought-iron signs, ignore the inevitable Irish pub, and have a strudel at the Veronika café, from which you can see the castle, rolling pine-clad hills and, in the distance, the looming peaks of the Julian Alps.

Food for political thought

Simon Owers finds Maastricht more fascinating than its reputation suggests

TELLING PEOPLE that you are going to Maastricht for a short break elicits the same polite but bewildered response as news of the decision to pebble-dash the house or keep geckos as pets. Before the Treaty most people were unaware of Maastricht's existence, and even now many people do not realise that it is not in Belgium but in Holland. Maastricht is one of the Netherlands' best kept secrets – a pretty, quiet, historic town at the country's most southern tip. As well as the synonymous Treaty, Maastricht is the annual venue of one of the world's top art and antique fairs, and is home to the best native cuisine the Netherlands has to offer. Founded by the Romans on a site where the Meuse could be easily crossed, Maastricht was a strategic pawn through centuries of European warfare and its city walls are the legacy of many sieges that it endured.

Whereas other quaint towns have a slightly more local charm, Maastricht's annals are grandly interwoven with the political histories of Europe, even to the present day. The basilica of St Servatius, the oldest church in the Netherlands, was an outpost of Rome two centuries before Augustine arrived in Canterbury. The Renaissance Spanish Government House, in the town centre is the base from where Charles V surveyed his Holy Roman Empire. In 1795 Maastricht became the capital of a French département after being taken by Napoleon, and following Waterloo became part of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Since 1867 it has been in the Netherlands, sitting in defiant isolation on a spit of land sandwiched between Belgium and Germany. The many cultural influences that have played a part in Maastricht's story have left their mark on the region's cooking – and the city's restaurants. This is, without doubt, a foodie's dream town. The people of Maastricht take great delight in proving that their cooking is the exception to the national rule. Just as Britain has experienced a recent culinary renaissance, so Maastricht is finding itself not just a centre of good cooking, but also of fashionable dining.

The cult of the personality chef is here taken to extreme here. The town has published a free pocket-booklet in which moody black and white portraits of its top chefs are accompanied by the individuals' musings on their relationship with food.

The only way to see Maastricht is by foot. Most of the meandering streets in the old town are given over to the pedestrian. This is a great place for shopping as well as sightseeing – the profusion of boutiques, galleries, and studios mean that even the most dedicated sightseeing tour is punctuated with long looks through windows and the favourable comparison with prices back home.

In this Catholic corner of a Calvinist country, look out for the Church of Our Blessed Lady, and the basilica and treasury of St Servatius. The town ramparts have been transformed into a raised footpath that runs alongside the river Meuse and close by many of the town's historic buildings.

Maastricht is second only to Amsterdam in the number of listed buildings it contains. The tourist information centre, close to the market place, organises inexpensive guided walking tours.

It seems rare for Maastricht not to be in some state of festive spirit, for its people love carnivals. The largest is the Mardi Gras at the beginning of Lent. The highlight in March is the

European Fine Art Fair, one of the four top art fairs in the world, when dealers and collectors descend on the town.

In spring, the Mayday celebrations involve the crowning of a May Prince who must be Maastricht born, 40 years old, and rich enough to host the celebrations that take place in his honour. Throughout the summer there are boat trips along the Meuse and tours of the surrounding towns and chateaux – Aachen, the capital of Charlemagne, is only half an hour away.

It is fulfilling to find a place with such an underserved reputation as Maastricht.

The best way to get to Maastricht is by train. Eurostar (0345 303030) offers a fare of £84 return from London Waterloo, changing at Brussels and Liege. You must book a week in advance and stay a Saturday night (if you don't book ahead, the fare rises by £15).

You can also fly direct from Stansted on Air Ezel, sold through KLM (0990 074074). More information from Netherlands Board of Tourism, PO Box 523, London SW1E 6NT (0291 717777).

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Land that time remembered

Cephallonia was one of the the great Greek secrets – until it became the subject of a modern classic. By Cathy Packe

IT IS hard to imagine that everyone who travels on the Orient Express passes the time reading Agatha Christie; certainly in the Fens I have never noticed anyone reading Graham Swift's *Waterland*. However, if you go to Cephallonia without a copy of Louis de Bernières's best-known novel, you would certainly feel that you stand out in the crowd.

Until *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* reached the bookshops three summers ago, very few people had given much thought to the island of Cephallonia. Most visitors to the Ionian islands went to Corfu or Paxos, according to whether they wanted a lively resort or a sleepy village; over the last three years, the number of tourists going to Greece has risen from nine to 12 million a year and the Greek embassy in London claims that *Captain Corelli* has had a "very definite effect".

Cephallonia is the largest of the eight Ionian islands, which guard the western side of the Greek mainland; Corfu at the northern end, is close to the coast of Albania, and Zakynthos in the south is a short ferry-ride from the Peloponnese. The building of an airport just outside Cephallonia's capital, Argostoli, has caused a small rash of tourist hotels, and the amenities that go with them, in the immediate vicinity. Outside this package-tour pocket, the inaccessibility of the roads and the hostile mountain terrain have meant that much of the island is completely unspoilt.

The scene of atrocities carried out by the occupying Germans in the Second World War, the island was ravaged by the terrible earthquake of 1953, in which the population of 128,000 was reduced to 20,000. Argostoli was almost completely destroyed, and has now been rebuilt as a modern town with lots of traffic snorting angrily around pedestrianised streets, and very little charm. Many mountain villages have been reconstructed higher up the slopes.

One of the few places to have remained untouched was the northern harbour village of Fiskardo. Many of its original Venetian houses remain, freshly painted each

year in blues and pinks. These days the buildings around the harbour have mostly been converted into tavernas and shops, and the local population is greatly increased in the summer months by visitors. But in the morning, you can still sit and watch a local fisherman arriving with his catch.

An astonishing variety of fish is unloaded into a large container of water, and each creature is carefully cleaned by hand. The local housewives, and the taverna owners, come down to the harbour and select the fish they want to cook that night, so if you see something you fancy you should take careful note of where it is going as it heads towards a restaurant kitchen.

At the other end of the day, the pace is dictated by the return to the harbour of the flotilla of sailing-school boats which use the calm waters of the Ionian sea to teach city-bound would-be sailors their craft. For the land-bound visitor, the beauty of Fiskardo is that there is absolutely nothing to do.

Once you have had breakfast, picked up a few essential supplies, had a swim, a siesta and a light lunch, there is just time for another dose before you set out for the first drink of the evening. The local red and white wine is called Robola; inexplicably served from a bottle in a sack, it could never be mistaken for one of the world's finest, but it is nevertheless very palatable.

There are ferries from Cephallonian villages to neighbouring islands, but often the timings make them more suited to island-hopping than day-trips. The tourist office in Fiskardo has got round this problem by organising tours – although this is a formal way to describe them – which visit various points on nearby islands, stopping off from time to time for sightseeing, lunch, or swimming. The most interesting of these is the trip around Ithaca, the supposed homeland of Odysseus, which Homer described as "a rocky, severe island".

The contrast between the barren, uninhabited coastline facing Cephallonia

and the greener, more populated eastern side, is striking, and there is the chance for lunch or a long walk around the charming village of Kioni. For some reason the tour which takes in the island of Lefkas concentrates on its more plebeian side – perhaps to suit the taste of the "Thomson's tribe", as one travelling companion scathingly described the package tourists, who were bussed in from the southern part of the island to join the boat trip.

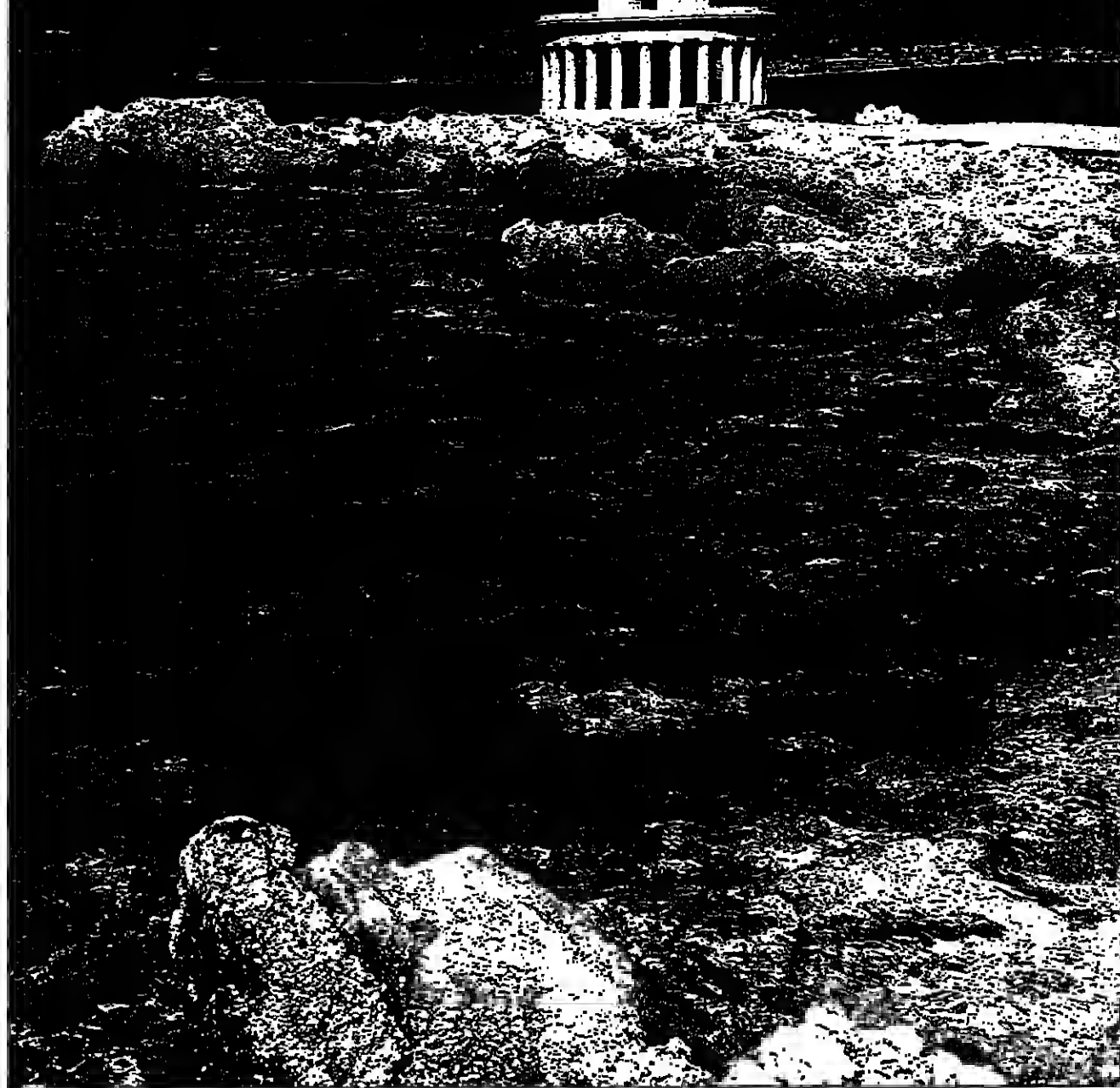
Transport around Cephallonia is more or less non-existent. The best way to explore the shoreline is to hire a little motor-boat and chug off down the coast. If you have the energy to explore the interior, it is worth hiring a car.

Like many Greek islands, there is nothing here that you absolutely must see, but the mountain scenery, and the remoteness of many of the villages, is breathtaking. It is impossible to get lost, even if you can't read the Greek signs, as most roads go round the island, with the exception of one which goes across the mountains to connect the village of Sami with the capital. The coastal villages nod towards the concerns of tourists, with tavernas and shops; there are caves and an underground lake to visit, but most of the settlements in the centre of the island are oblivious to the preoccupations of visitors.

The outside world is now taking an interest in Cephallonia, largely thanks to *Captain Corelli*. But apart from innumerable copies of the book, I saw no evidence of him on the island – no tavernas in his name, no walks, not even a mandolin concert.

When the captain returns to 1990s Cephallonia at the end of the story, he laments that everything has changed. This seems to me a rather harsh judgment. With the exception of the area immediately around the airport, it is amazing how much remains the same.

Cathy Packe paid £460 for a week in Cephallonia with Simply Ionian (0181-995 9323). This included a return flight, self-catering apartment, and car hire.



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Island dwellers: a blue-footed booby bird, above, and a marine iguana

Sybil Sassoon/Robert Harding Picture Library



Survival of the fattest

In the Galapagos Islands, it wasn't the weird wildlife that worried Claire Boobyer. It was her fellow tourists

There were 10 of them, all kept in close proximity for eight days. One was so large, he found it difficult lying down to sleep. And his behaviour seemed to offend the other nine. One was constantly ill, and one had a close encounter with a marine iguana. These creatures – species type *Homo sapiens* – had come to view the wildlife of the Galapagos Islands. And, some of the time, observing the collection of tourists was as interesting as watching the animals we had come to see.

And so it was that 6ft 5in Anthony regaled us with tales of shark-spotting and his sea lion bite. His manner was not to everyone's liking, and the fact that he almost had to double up to get in his bunk was seen as just comeuppance. Beth, an American, was on holiday to escape the pressures of life as a psychologist.

There were two gay men who kept us amused with tales of outrageous fancy-dress parties, three Swiss tourists who hardly said a word, and another American who entered into banter with Anthony. And, finally, there was my sister, who was struggling to get over typhoid, despite having spent a week on the mainland, hospitalised, on a drip.

Eight days on a boat on the ocean with strangers is an integral part of any trip to this part of the world. We had flown from Quito to the island of Baltra. From here we boarded our boat, the *Cocholote*, via a dinghy.

We stepped over sleeping sea lions with our luggage, and a young blue-footed booby bird hitched a ride to what was to be our home for the next week. From out of the writhing and twisting black lava covering the volcanic islands of the Galapagos, wander birds with red balloons on their chests and lizards that look as if they belong on the set of *Jurassic Park*.

I set off on my trip to the Galapagos in the belief that the islands were studied with palm trees and that lush green hills spread inland. But we set foot on unfriendly, jagged outcrops of thick solidified lava. We had to dodge deep chasms running through this bellish landscape, and constantly see 20 or so large red speckled crabs scuttle loudly across our path.

The archipelago, which straddles the Equator, is a paradise for sea lions and birds. The tourists flock in their thousands to see these remote Pacific outposts. But slaughter and extinction lap at these islands' shores.

Charles Darwin, whose journey here was, after all, so groundbreaking, wrote in his journal: "The natural history of these islands is eminently curious and well deserves attention. Most of the organic productions are aboriginal creations, found nowhere else."

What is also curious about the Galapagos animals is their fearlessness. Should they be on any of the paths that criss-cross the islands, they will simply sit and stare, preen, eat, mate or do whatever else they happen to be doing. Not one of them ran away in our presence. During our trip visiting nine islands in the chain, we stepped over yellow land iguanas with manes of milky horns, munching cactus; we stood in the flight path of albatrosses; and our feet were subject to inspection by inquisitive sea lions.

Each morning, it was announced whether it would be a dry or a wet landing. Dry meant boots, wet meant sandals.

Beth got confused one day and ended up missing a walking trip. While lying on the beach she felt something heavy on her stomach. Opening her eyes she found herself eyeballing a marine iguana. She screamed, which she later regretted, and he scampered off.

Watching tiny lava lizards hitching a ride on the backs of the ugly black marine iguanas – the only sea-going lizards in the world – and skirting the nests of busy booby birds, was all part of the entertainment of the islands.

Blue-footed boobies look as though they have stepped in a freshly poured dish of paint, and the red-footed variety seem unnaturally bright with their blue and pink beak and what looks like carefully applied blue eyeliner. In fact, a number of Galapagos birds sport thick eyeliner. The grey gulls wear a vivid orange, the baby frigate birds a dusky grey, and the Galapagos doves a thick line of light blue topped by black.

The sea lions, which do not indulge in eyeliner but have fine sets of whiskers, are quite simply cute. There is no other word for it. They bask in the sun on the white sand beaches like British holiday-makers. Their skin gleams, and they smile at you with their adorable faces. Snorkelling every day from our boat, we found ourselves coming face to face with these fun-loving creatures. They would twist and turn about us as we attempted to follow them in the clear waters.

Being so playful has its disadvantages. We had just landed on Santa Cruz Island, when we heard a commotion coming from the sea lion colony. We turned around to see the sea awash with blood: three sharks were attacking the sea lions.

One victim had a third of its tail chewed off, and was left to die on the rocks. Three fins glided up and down, parting the bloody waters. But the sea lions dived in and started teasing the sharks. This was no game, though, and another fell victim to the predators. Cries of "Oh, can't we go and rescue them?" were heard as we stood at a safe distance from the unfolding drama.

Giant tortoises have also suffered from predators. The only giant tortoises we saw on the islands were in captivity at the Darwin Research



Station on the island of Santa Cruz. In the last century whalers fed on the animals in their hundreds, storing them for months on end on the boats where they survived, unfed, living off their own fat stores. Today, some of the tortoise species that gave their name to the archipelago are extinct.

Meanwhile many dogs and goats that were introduced to the islands have turned feral, eating the iguanas and birds. And we even learnt that wild goats on James Island had adapted to the conditions in less than 100 years, and were now able to drink sea water.

All of which sounds enough to be amazed at. But on top of this there were moments of extreme wonder during our trip to the archipelago – the sight of leaping dolphins that trailed our boat, flamingos tiptoeing about a pond, and Galapagos penguins diving into the ocean.

We watched the sky turn black with birds like some horror movie scenario, and we observed the magnificent male frigate bird puff out his red chest and make a noise like a drum tap to attract the opposite sex.

Some of these curious-looking birds had droppings scattered down their chests. It is like a man trying to woo a woman with gravy down his tie – there is no accounting for taste.

FACT FILE

When to go
The period from the end of December to March is ideal, especially for snorkellers and divers, being warm and calm. July to December is mistier and drizzly (especially in September and October) but much of the wildlife is there all year round.

How to get there
First find your way to Quito, the capital of Ecuador. South American

Experience (0171-976 5511) has a fare of £526 including tax on Avianca via Bogotá, or pay £3 more on Iberia via Madrid. From here, two airlines (Tame and San) fly to Baltra and San Cristobal respectively, for a fare of £200-£250 return. The Ecuadorian Air Force is another possibility.

What to sign up for
South American Experience says the total cost for a seven-night cruise can

be anything from £500 to £1,625. A hotel/cruise combination can cost as little as £450, and is especially suitable for those prone to seasickness.

What to read
The *Odysey Illustrated Guide to the Galapagos Islands* by Pierre Constant (£14.95) contains the touching dedication: "To Mei Fang, who had to get up every morning to type the book instead of sleeping until noon, as usual."

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It wasn't the
Claire Boohy

UPGRADED, BUMPED and downgraded - all within 15 minutes. St Petersburg airport was fairly lively last Monday evening.

As usual, I was travelling on a "bucket-shop" ticket: a cheapie on Lufthansa from Russia's second city via Hamburg to Heathrow. At check-in I waved a frequent-flyer card on one of Lufthansa's partner airlines, and, without a word, the official handed me a boarding card in business class. I was shortly to find out why this perk had, temporarily, been accorded. There are few moments more laden with foreboding than when you hear your name being called at a Russian airport, with a request to return to passport control. The bureaucracy at St Petersburg is just as contrary as it was when the city was known as Leningrad, and regular travellers know not to celebrate their departure until well clear of Russian airspace. Fortunately, there was no last-minute wrinkle with my visa or customs form. Instead, the Lufthansa check-in official was standing there with an offer of the unrefusable variety.

"The flight to Hamburg is overbooked. Would you like to go straight to London instead? There's a British Airways flight half an hour later."

I acquiesced happily and immediately, and he exchanged my business-class boarding pass for a British Airways one - firmly in economy class. It became clear that I had only been upgraded in the first place because too many economy passengers had turned up. As is common airline practice, anyone with a frequent-flyer card is first in line for upgrades. So when one too many business-class passengers arrived, the cheap pretender had to go.

I could have held out for compensation - transport from Gatwick (where the BA flight arrived) to my intended destination of Heathrow, or EU-prescribed Denied Boarding Compensation for bumped passengers. But I stood to get home an hour earlier on the direct flight, so I just thanked him, then tried to use my unexpected new role as BA passenger to get into the Executive Lounge. I was thrown out, but by now I was getting used to rejection.

Yet had Lufthansa orchestrated the offer properly, I would happily have paid a reasonable sum to get a direct flight rather than a connection at Hamburg. Both airlines refuse to divulge how much Lufthansa paid BA for taking me home, but it is likely to be around £250 - almost as much as my return ticket. A donation from me of around £25 would have helped the German airline stanch its losses. But, in return, I would have asked for the business-class boarding pass as a souvenir of 15 minutes as a Lufthansa premium passenger.



SIMON CALDER

When one too many business-class passengers arrived, the cheap pretender had to go

IN TRAVEL terms, St Petersburg is a contrary city. On the Underground in London and in other cities, electronic displays show travellers when the next train is expected.

On the St Petersburg metro (and the half-dozen other underground networks in former Soviet cities), illuminated figures say merely when the last one departed. This is a nation that looks to the past rather than to the future.

THE RECENT past is confronted in a series of advertisements that British Airways is running in the St Petersburg press.

If you remember the Tupolev 144, the ill-fated Soviet supersonic aircraft dubbed Concorde, this pair of statements will be all the more significant.

"Do you know that if you are not a military pilot, Concorde is your only chance to experience supersonic [sic]."

"If you are not a cosmonaut, Concorde is your only chance to fly in the Stratosphere."

But after emphasising Western superiority in aviation, BA comes up with an offer that no well-to-do Russian could refuse: "Fly Concorde to New York with our special offer of US\$3,780."

So, for around £2,100, you can fly in Club Class from St Petersburg to London and transfer to Club World to New York, and return supersonic, with a three-hour flight back to London, where a Club Europe seat to St Petersburg awaits.

This beats telling the comrades that you flew in from Miami Beach BOAC. It also beats the fare that we in the capitalist West must pay: if you call BA and ask for the lowest Club World/Concorde combo to New York, you will be quoted £5,034. The Club Class return to St Petersburg is normally another £1,256.

Yet although the Russians get the luxury treatment for one-third of the price we have to pay, they cannot expect an entirely smooth journey: the ad fails to point out that flights arrive at and depart from different airports, so these lucky passengers also get a bus ride around the M25 between Heathrow and Gatwick.

On the road to Damascus

Syria, the land of Crusades and Templars, has been overlooked by modern travellers for too long, writes Jonathan Phillips



Krak des Chevaliers tops Syria's list of attractions while the town of Tartous, right, radiates a welcoming, easy-going charm



Juliette Constantin/Jonathan Phillips

Picture this: a stagnant marina, a nearby container port and a ring-road choked with dusty lorries and ancient buses. Welcome to the town of Tartous on the Syrian coast.

With political instability endemic in the Middle East, Syria is not an obvious holiday destination; but for those in search of a hot climate and high culture in a challenging, on-package setting, it offers great rewards. The cities of Aleppo and Damascus are the natural starting-points for visitors to Syria, but it is worth taking a break from the big cities and heading out to the coast where, in spite of its less salubrious outskirts, the old town of Tartous is intriguing. It is also a good base from which to visit the castle of Krak des Chevaliers, one of the most remarkable medieval sites in the eastern Mediterranean. But first, wander around Tartous itself.

At the heart of the town stands a Templar citadel, whose walls and courtyards survive submerged under the homes of today's inhabitants. Here, you encounter a bewildering mix of medieval and modern: lines of washing hang from ramps; Crusader arches are distorted and extended to accommodate aluminium-framed windows; the lower part of an old refectory now forms three separate houses, yet ruined Gothic buttresses sprout from their flat concrete roofs. Exploring the citadel strikes a delicate balance between curiosity to see the past, and intrusion into the lives of the locals.

Syrian people are extraordinarily hospitable and naturally funny (our party, stricken by illness, was told that a film had opened in Damascus called *The Sick British*, meaning, of course, *The English Patient*). Throughout most of the country, Westerners are made to feel very welcome, and Tartous is no exception to this. The difficulties arise where the past and present co-exist in such close proximity. To see the remains of the Templar church, for example (a site that has a newly restored hotel and doorway and thus advertises its presence to tourists), requires a visit to the backyard of four small houses, where the remaining medieval arches compete for attention with pools of urine and piles of refuse.

Likewise, the Templars' Great Hall is reached by passing along a narrow

alley and walking directly past the open doors and living-rooms of family homes. All smile at you genuinely enough, but I felt that I had intruded a little too far. Best to go back to the main courtyard and look at the buildings from the outside, or else visit the town's real gem, the former cathedral of St Mary. This has fortified towers at its corners; inside are the plain, pure lines of the churches of the Crusaders' homelands in France.

Tartous is not simply about history, though. Strolling around the old town, your overriding impression is that the place is a mess; yet somehow its very tatters conjure up an easy-going charm that more than compensates for its lack of obvious comforts. Down by the shoreline, for example, stalls display the morning's catch, while the food stores you see vast quantities of fresh produce. None of the sanitised uniformity of supermarket fruit and vegetable counters here: there are cauliflowers the size of footballs, mounds of misshapen tomatoes and pyramids of gargantuan pomegranates. In the early evening, couples stroll arm in arm along the seafront. Such a relaxed ambience is not always found in Syria's main tourist centres and is a welcome contrast to the dusty intensity of Damascus and the cheerful chaos of Aleppo.

Inland from Tartous, the gently rolling hills are covered with tens of thousands of olive trees. The women working the fields dress soberly compared with those at the coast. Syria has a significant non-Muslim community, and its Greek Orthodox population is based around the imposing Hospitaller keep at Safita. The view from the 100ft-high tower reveals, 15 kilometres to the south, the brooding mass of Krak des Chevaliers - probably the world's greatest medieval castle and top of the list of Syria's attractions. Perched 2,000 feet up on a ridge and constructed to guard the valley running between the Muslim city of Homs and the vulnerable Crusader settlements on the coast, Krak is surprisingly small; however, its sheer muscularity and excellent state of preservation make up for its compact size. Twisting and turning up the sinuous entrance passage builds a real sense of expectation; and when, after the cool gloom of the ascent, you emerge into bright sunlight again, you are right in the heart of the complex. A small, al-

most claustrophobic enclosure is framed along one side by a delicate loggia - a reminder that religious observance and fighting wars were inseparable aspects of life for Krak's original inhabitants.

Krak was in a state of chaos on my visit; which is, in one respect, a more realistic way to see a castle than as a cold, antiseptic ruin. It was being used as the location to film an anthology of Shakespeare's works in Arabic. The knights' chapel was a dressing-room, and some of the towers had been taken over by props and scenery. Yet compensation for this 20th-century intrusion awaited in the stables. The filmmakers had returned these to their original state, and the horses stamping and stirring up dust along the full length of the huge, vaulted room, created a truly medieval atmosphere.

With such a dazzling display of riches on offer - and when, as one local put it, "the war" is over - more and more people will flock into Syria. You hope that the relaxed charm of the coast is not lost, and that the dust and mess that work in Tartous' favour are not totally submerged under concrete. The region has a captivating serenity. Enjoy it while you can.

Between them, British Airways (0345 222111) and Syrian Arab Airways (0171 493 2851) fly from Heathrow to Damascus. Visitors require a visa, which must be obtained in advance from the Syrian Embassy, 8 Belgrave Square, London W1 (0691 600171).

THAT SUMMER BAGHDAD 1989

The calm before the Desert Storm

MY ENTRY into Iraqi airspace in the summer of 1989 began with an indignity in an airborne convenience. At 40,000 feet above the mountains of Kurdistan, as I occupied a WC on an Iraqi Airways 747, a fellow passenger tried to force an entry. It was an understandable error. The door's lock was broken and I had been holding it to with my feet. He pushed, and I pushed back. He then pushed back harder. I held off the assault for about 30 seconds until I snarled: "Do you mind!" He barked something back in Arabic and retreated.

I was flying to Baghdad during a brief respite in Iraq's perennial tribulations to visit my father. The war with Iran was over; the Allies had not yet assembled their military hardware among the Bedouin sands for the liberation of Kuwait. Nor had much of Iraq's infrastructure been shelled to rubble.

As we stepped off the plane at Baghdad the heat pushed us in the face like a hot air vent on maximum. We were bused to the terminal

Muthena Paul Alkazraji visited Baghdad before the Gulf War and found a thriving city heavy on politics

building beneath large neon lettering that spelled out unambiguously: Saddam International Airport.

We filed past shifty security personnel wearing mirror-lens sunglasses and casually tonguing government-issue toothpicks, before entering baggage reclaim. It was here that two men I had never met before greeted me like the returning prodigal son, embracing and kissing me on each cheek. I took it as the customary Arabic greeting.

My father greeted me too, a little less demonstratively. (That evening when I was introduced at a dinner party, I heartily embraced the first person presented. "No," he scoffed stiffly. "Too familiar." I sheepishly shook the remaining guests' hands.)

Outside the airport we climbed into a Chevrolet and the two men, who turned out to be ingratiating junior employees at my father's office,

drove us swiftly into the heart of the city. I sat in the back like a diplomat.

I stayed with my father for the next four weeks, in a suburb close to the city's football stadium. When I was killing time at his house, an entertainment highlight would be the regular broadcasts of Iraqi TV news. The theme music built up to a dramatic intensity fit for any Hitchcock climax, but the domestic coverage that followed was little more than scenes of government officials wandering serenely around hotel foyers to the strains of Vivaldi.

When my father was not tied to his desk, we drove around Baghdad in air-conditioned comfort, visiting the city's sites and souks. He bought me a pair of "proper trousers" (brown acrylic, with a crease down the front). "Do you want me to grow a moustache like Freddy Mercury's?" Then I will be a complete

Arab," I said. We stopped at open-air restaurants for chick-peas, shish kebabs and Shahrazad beers, and dropped in on relatives and friends who fed us with okra and rice, wedges of watermelon and tiny glasses of sweet tea. His friends were invariably delighted to meet someone from England; so many of them had studied in the UK.

We drove past the ugly Unknown Soldier's Monument in Zawra Park, with its two giant arms clasping sabres to form an arch. Helmets of Iranian soldiers had been tastefully hung at the base.

We visited the towering split dome of the Martyr's Monument; my father had been personnel manager for Brazilian labour brought in to build it. His days working there had, he said, been good times. On one occasion he had mistakenly driven up a road towards a presi-

dential compound. Worse, his old van had backfired, alarming and severely irritating the Republican Guard. He was imprisoned for 14 days for this. To relieve his boredom, the Brazilians performed samba music below his cell windows.

On another occasion some Brazilians had decided it would be amusing to draw a giant pair of spectacles on a public painting of Saddam Hussein. They were all thrown in jail, and my father managed to return their favour by securing their release.

We also cruised past the intriguing Ali Baba's Monument, where a statue of Murjana pours boiling oil on to the heads of the 40 thieves hiding in pots below. I spent a further day immersed in the Assyrian and Babylonian archaeology at the Iraq Museum, and we browsed around the copper and carpet merchants of Rashid Street. Baghdad was buzzing and prospering. At many sites I caused my father anguish by taking photographs too close to government buildings, or with soldiers in the frame (easily done in Baghdad).

More than once he pulled over for a shot of gin to calm his nerves.

One evening we ate by the banks of the Tigris at a fish restaurant on Abu Nuas street. Here the fat Mazgouf fish were kept in tanks and pegged out around tamarisk wood fires to grill. Here, with the palm trees rustling, my father dozed and broke wind like a satisfied caliph.

In the bar of the Al-Rashid hotel - where the Western media set up camp two years later during the Gulf conflict, and from where CNN beamed out pictures of missiles steering their ominous course over the suburbs - we got chatting to a group of English businessmen.

At the time I guessed they might be a party of refrigerator salesmen from Wetherby; history now offers a few alternatives. "Did you know," I proclaimed boldly, "that Amnesty International has documented grave human rights violations here?" It was a bit of a conversation-stopper; panic flashed across my father's face. Back at the car I was severely ticked off.

My final week in Baghdad was none too relaxing. Between the airline office and home my ticket vanished, and they would not reissue me with another booking until four days after my visa expired. This meant getting a visa extension. Every day we would return to the immigration office on Sa'doun street to collect my passport, and the officials would grin and tell us to come back next day. My father told me not to look so stressed; it might make them suspicious. This made me more stressed and aroused their suspicions. They handed the passport over eventually, and I flew home.

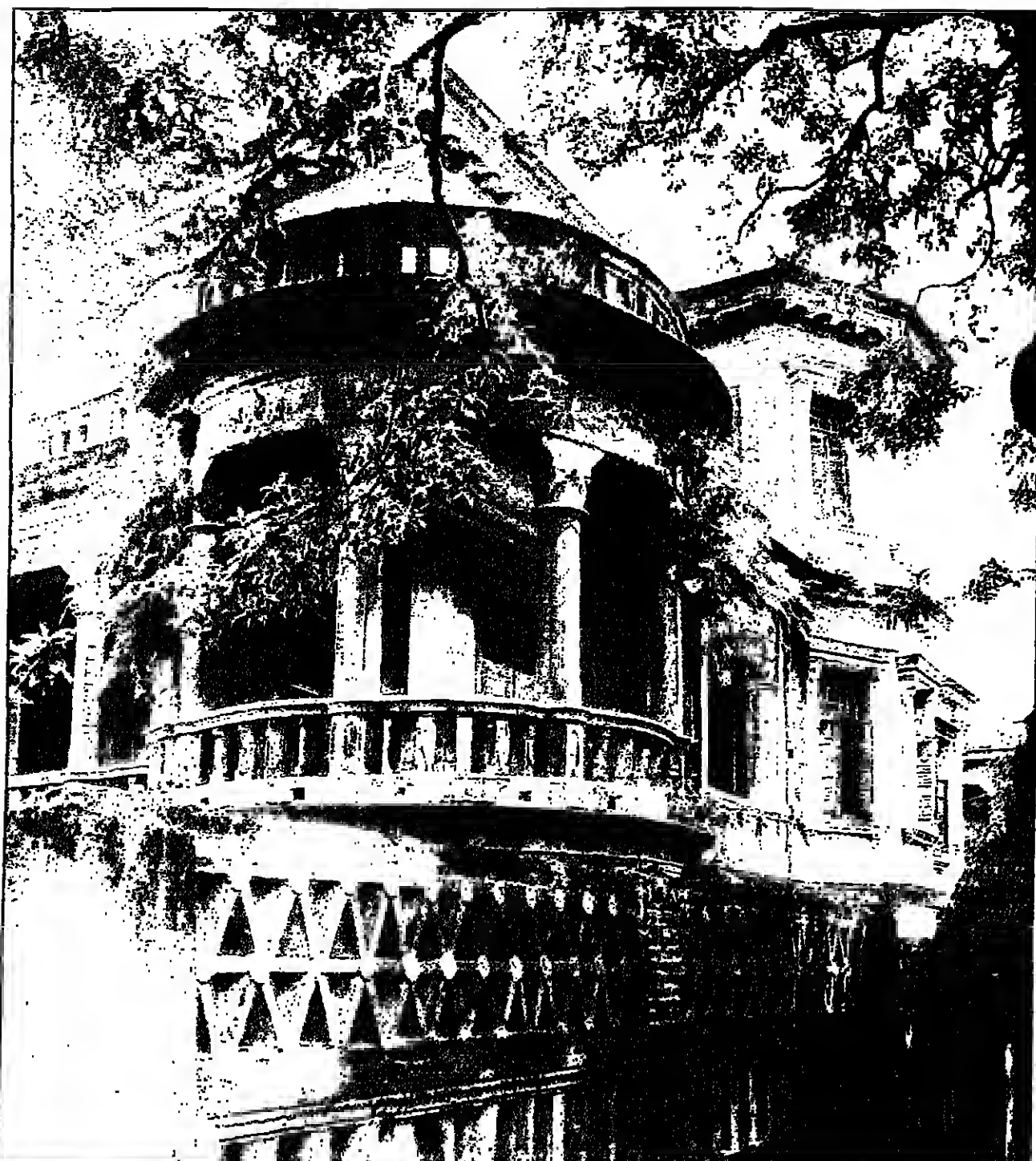
My father remained in Baghdad throughout the Allied air raids in January and February 1991. He told me later how he sat on the roof of a bomb-shelter and watched anti-aircraft guns rake the sky like fireworks. There, at least, he figured he could see when a missile was heading towards him.

I have not been back to Baghdad since, but if economic sanctions are ever lifted, I hope to.

TRAVEL

● GALAPAGOS GROUPIES 27

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Xiamen's eclectic mix of colonial and ethnic architecture

Amar Grover

Amoy and the ancestors

Xiamen, once Amoy, an island off Hong Kong, holds memories of a turbulent history. Amar Grover explored

The spartan shelves of "No 1 Shop" harboured a few oddities. There was that old favourite, Pearl Powder, and a daunting concoction in vials, called Eastern Magic Juice. "No 2 Shop" was a clone of the first one, and Nos 1 and 2 bars were about as cheerful as cold dim sum.

Such austerity did not square with our cruise through Hong Kong's harbour, surely the No 1 way to depart this glitzy city. Gleaming temples of trade slid away as we sailed on through the South China Sea. The crew, all neat blue blazers and skirts, had greeted us effusively when we boarded; now they settled down to chat or disappeared altogether. Passengers were left to their own distractions. The Jimei, a utilitarian ferry of fluorescent lighting, linoleum and unlockable cabins, was a far cry from sophistication.

China's bulkheads have not always been so secure. Serious leaks developed after its first Opium war, when the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing declared five "treaty ports". Shanghai became the biggest and brashiest, Amoy the most picturesque. A century and a half later, Amoy's name has changed to Xiamen, it is awash with Taiwanese money – and the Jimei sails there regularly from Hong Kong in 18 hours.

Xiamen is an 80-square-kilometre island lying just off the mainland and linked to it by a causeway. The main draw is Gulangyu islet, which faces Xiamen city across a busy, narrow channel. Foreign traders flocked here from around 1850. As an "international concession", as well as treaty ports, it had special privileges that created an enclave exempt from Manchu authority. In time wealthy Chinese merchants came abroad too. They all lived well. Palatial mansions linked by winding shady lanes enriched its low hills. Tangy breezes cooled and sea views beckoned.

Remarkably for today's go-ahead China, little has changed.

I was joined on deck next morning by Tin, a student returning home for the summer. Rusty freighters lay at anchor and the odd sampan bobbed on the swell. The Jimei had slowed to a crawl and Xiamen hung on the horizon. "Giving us time for breakfast, are they?" I joked.

Gradually Xiamen's hills and youthful cityscape – a bit like Hong Kong's 40 years ago – bove into view. As we neared shore, he pointed to Gulangyu. You cannot miss

its enormous statue of Koxinga, the 17th-century pirate king who bootied the Dutch out of nearby Taiwan. Today he glares east at the nationalists across the sea, as though evangelising true salvation lies in the lands at his feet.

Grimy terracotta roofs poked through a canopy of green. Waves lapped thin beaches as pavilions emerged between pines. Tin became wistful, and in a surge of nostalgia he offered to show me round. We agreed to meet next day.

His family now live in a typically bland modern suburb, but Tin's heart lies with the little island where he grew up. It was not hard to see why. There is faded grandeur in its crumbling mansions with their jalousied windows, porches and verandas. Gulangyu has lanes instead of roads, and there are no cars. Occasional electric buggies whirr past, containing Chinese tourists lured by tranquillity, sea food and the beach.

Xiamen has long lived on trade and today's pragmatic approach is apt. Mercantile history has come full circle. It was declared a Special Economic Zone in the early Eighties, and its skyscrapers soar at the city's boom. There is a distinct air of chutzpah down Zhongshan Lu, the city's commercial artery. I dawdled in a shoreline park by flashy floating-restaurants before scrambling aboard a ferry bound for Gulangyu.

Just minutes away from all that hustle and bustle and the noise and smells, Tin explained how expensive life had become. Overseas Chinese now own most of the best houses, and prices have rocketed.

We had wandered through a busy quarter where stalls sold tat to the tourists. Young, beaming women stood outside restaurants amid gurgling basins full of live eels, crabs and lobsters. In quieter neighbourhoods, birds sang from cages and muffled chatter whiffled through open windows. Snatches of piano tinkled here and there. Stopping before a kind of stuccoed portal with iron gates, Tin announced our arrival.

Art students were moulding huge plaster busts on the porch as we strolled in. An old fellow welcomed Tin, stared at me and ushered us both inside. Loose tiles clinked underfoot and I glimpsed spoiled frescoes that had faded or been mostly covered with whitewash. The place had all the disarray of a partitioned house. The old neighbour led us to his rooms, cramped but tidy, and I sipped tea as Tin caught up with gossip.

Later we climbed to the first floor of another household. A man in shorts and vest waved us through; a cook, I thought, "The owner," muttered Tin. "Family in Taiwan, very wealthy..." he trailed off. High, coffered ceilings yielded cool and airy rooms. The top floor had been crudely modernised, squeezing in an extra flat. From the terrace we gazed across magnolia-filled compounds at verandas lush with potted plants. Even in decay there was a lingering elegance.

This mansion was one of eight built for the sons of the wealthy Yung family; others lay nearby. European styles and motifs had fused with Chinese principles of feng shui that dictated their location and aspect. The most imposing of the lot – a neo-classic, red-domed pile, now the Xiamen Museum – sat atop a low hill.

It looked like an exercise in aggrandisement. With domed hall and cavernous corridors, this felt more like a tomb. Much of its displays were limited to photographs of Gulangyu's historic buildings. One section displayed other countries' national gifts. Another examined the opium trade, uncomfortable perhaps for British visitors who, if cornered, might struggle to explain away that 19th-century economic thugger.

Gulangyu's imperial Sish police force is long gone. The old British consulate stands somewhat forlorn down by the sea. Old enmities have been forgotten if not forgiven. Now Taiwan is subject to periodic venom. Politically its very existence rankles. Officially its investments are welcome. As privately it intrigues.

Small-time entrepreneurs have not missed a chance. Each morning their telescopes pop up along the islet's southern shores. For a fee of about 7p, punters squint across the waves at outcrops of the Taiwanese-held Jintan islands. There is little to see; a few hills, the odd pillbox and some scruffy cabins. There are huge signs, too, that face Xiamen and pledge eternal brotherhood.

I met up again with Tin in the evening. We fell into a greasy café. Steaming bowls of a local speciality broth were plonked down before us. Cooks looked on in first-forgiveness across their threshold amazement. Diners sucked and slurped contentedly. Tin had seen the house of his dreams, yet in reality it was as elusive as an ancestral spirit. "Money and connections," he sighed. Even luck was not enough; 150 years on, Gulangyu is as desirable – and almost as exclusive – as ever.

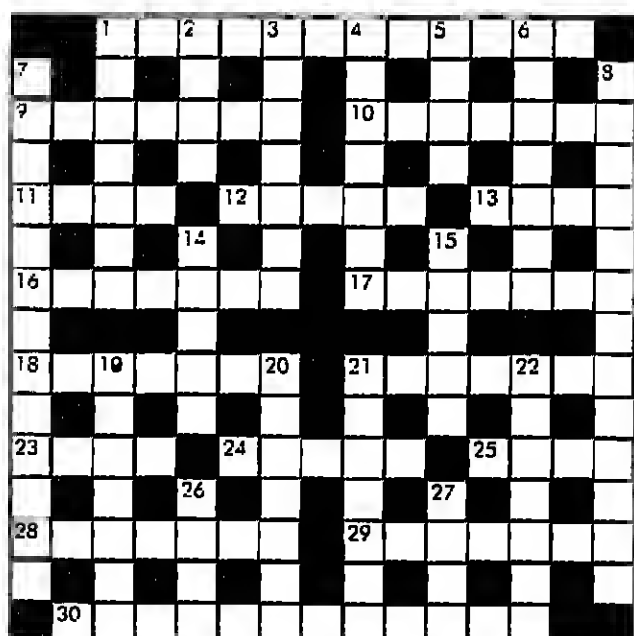
THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

No. 3672 Saturday 25 July

By Phil

ACROSS

DOWN



1 This paper is misguided about Rector or other man of God (6, 6)

9 Pots slightly chipped by stones (7)

10 A quantity of oats, perhaps, is start for horse that's hungry (7)

11 Cry – the sound of a huge mammal (4)

12 and 24 Poor, poor Wales faced with onset of rain won't benefit from this! (5, 5)

13 Lip from British marine? That'll have one imprisoned (4)

16 Angry about no-good churl (7)

17 Knight imprisoned in castle and losing heart – takes to this for prayer? (4-3)

18 Saw demonstrator taking on first of bobbies (7)

21 Plutocrat almost angry about rejection of employment (7)

23 Doubtful judge removed in an instant (4)

25 Train off the rails? (4)

28 One against participating in court case seen as minor (7)

29 Foolish characteristic, ignoring mother (7)

30 I'd sand and trees waving around edge of lagoon (6, 6)

1 What one's sent for a sudden departure? (7)

2 Some more effective type of knot? (4)

3 Ploy he's adapted for covert observation (5-4)

4 Fat kept working, providing encouragement (3-4-1)

5 Problem in East London causes irritation (4)

6 Support for rider's anger about start of race (7)

7 Uniformed girl indicates source of credit? (7, 6)

8 Hit Much Adu set at sea has capacity to make money (3, 3, 3)

14 and 15 Fruit chopped up by women later (5)

19 Team hitting a bad patch – unable to score (7)

20 Put on a charge and allowed a small amount of informative literature (7)

21 Believes what one sees in the movies? (7)

22 Seen in rush situation? (7)

26 Small insect – it's tucking into me! (4)

27 A Princess from opera could become an opera character (4)

Friday's solution

FIISHFARMS SCIAIR
GRIEF GREYAREAS
LEITICVOLI
ABRAHAM KNEEPAID
PHONOUNGEMENT
SILVER
COUNTERATTACK
ELIMAEAE
MELANIN DORMANT
ELIKRITR
TRANSVAAL TRISH
TITITASEE
GRIEW DIGITANTIS

Last Saturday's solution

HRHYPG
LITERATE REASON
BENIN
TITF INHABITANT
SEAUAE
ECLATRLANDLORD
UB
SUBORN ALMOND
RAFINO
LDDSTAN DOISAGE
RVEE
OPTICALARY GIBE
RABCAUO
PASTEL HACIENDA
NEEHHEV

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of... Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: H Donson, Bechill-on-Sen, K. Hines, Mold; J Bradford, Manchester; M Anderson, Heathfield; A Donovan, Haywards Heath.

FACT FILE

Getting there: Air China (0171-630 0919) but fly only to Peking at the moment. British Airways (0345 222111), Cathay Pacific (0171-747 8888) and Virgin Atlantic (01293 747747) fly non-stop between Heathrow and the Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region of China.

Red tape: British passport holders need no visa to enter Hong Kong, but beyond that you need a Chinese visa, which is most



easily obtained through the China Travel Service, 7 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9DL (0171-836 3688).

This agency charges £10 on top of the normal £25 fee. You need your passport, a completed application form and one photograph. Allow a week for processing. You can obtain a visa more quickly in Hong Kong if you are travelling to China via the SAR, and pay only HK\$100 (about £8).

There have been some reports that the documents of British visitors are currently being checked especially assiduously by Chinese officials because of the present political differences over Hong Kong.

Getting around: The Yick Fung Shipping vessel sails twice a week from Hong Kong to Xiamen; the cost of the one-way fare will be approximately HK\$750 (about £70).

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Car insurance to cost more

A ruling to give accident victims more compensation means higher premiums. By Paul Slade

The bad news for drivers doesn't stop with this week's White Paper on transport. Car insurance premiums may also be on the way up too, thanks to a House of Lords compensation ruling earlier this month.

Investment experts believe the Lords ruling will give accident victims more compensation than the courts intend. Graham Bates of Leeds independent financial advisers Bates & Partners, says: "It's certainly going to be a winner for the victims, but the public are going to suffer higher premiums all round."

The Lords ruling settles three long-running test cases involving accident victims who believed the compensation payments they got from insurers were too low. The point at issue was how claimants should invest the lump-sum compensation they receive to provide an income and meet the cost of care for the rest of their lives.

Insurers argue that claimants will put their compensation into equities, giving an annual return of 4 or 5 per cent over and above inflation. But the Lords rejected this view, saying equity investment was too risky. Instead, they ruled that insurers' and the courts should assume claimants will invest in far safer index-linked gilts, reducing their return to 3 per cent above inflation.

Getting the same annual income from this assumed lower growth rate means a larger lump sum must be awarded in the first place. This means, in turn, that insurance premiums must rise to meet the cost of bigger claims. Motor insurance rates will be hit, as will em-



David Cronenberg's film, 'Crash', portrays the seductive power of motoring accidents. But for those who are seriously hurt, compensation matters - and it could cost us more in premiums

ployers' liability and professional indemnity premiums.

Mark Boleat, director general at the Association of British Insurers, says: "This is something that is clearly going to increase insurance companies' claims in future years. Insurers will simply increase their premiums to match the expected extra payments."

Personal accident cases produce

big claims. In Wells v Wells, one of the three test cases, the effect of the Lords ruling was to increase Mrs Wells' compensation for injuries suffered in a car accident from £1.1m to about £1.6m - a rise of 45 per cent. Mr Wells was driving the car at the time, and was insured by ITT London & Edinburgh.

However, Graham Bates says he would never advise someone like

Mrs Wells to put the whole £1.6m into index-linked gilts. "It would be an absolute nonsense, because one of the keys to successful investment is to have a balanced approach and a sensible spread of different investment types. The ruling is erring on the side of caution, but it is also erring on the side of stupidity."

No-one seems very sure just how big the increase in premiums will be.

AA insurance director George Lowe says: "You get various estimates. Some people say 7.5 per cent. I think it will be about 4 per cent or 5 per cent on a fully-comprehensive policy, and about 3 per cent on non-comprehensive cover."

ITT London & Edinburgh group marketing manager Lloyd Hanks' guess is also that motor premiums will rise by up to 5 per cent. This

would add about £15 a year to the cost of a typical policy.

Mr Boleat says the result of the change will be to give compensation claimants a better deal, as they will get both the larger lump sum payment, and a higher investment return than the court assumes.

He would rather see lump-sum compensation replaced by a system of annual payments. If the court de-

cided the victim should get, say, £50,000 a year, the insurer would simply hand over a cheque for that amount, plus inflation, year by year for the rest of the claimant's life.

But claimants are unlikely to accept this solution, as it would cut the amount they get. Boleat says: "If a lawyer is trying to get as much money as possible for his client, he may press for the cash sum."

The Lords ruling comes at a time when insurers say motor premiums already need to rise.

The dog-eat-dog motor insurance market, where policies are often sold on price alone - has forced insurers to hold premiums down despite rising claims.

Derek Howie, assistant lia-

bility manager at Eagle Star, says: "We've had about three years of premiums going down. We have been struggling against falling rates at a time when claim costs generally are rising way above the retail price index."

The Association of British Insurers' (ABI) latest figures show that motor insurers' underwriting loss grew by £2.6 per cent to reach 1.14bn in 1997. This figure represents the difference between claims paid out and admin costs ves-

rus the amount received in premiums. But it takes no account of the investment income that insurers get from the premiums they hold.

"This level of underwriting loss is not sustainable," the ABI says, adding that premi-

um increases are "much needed" - though presumably not by policyholders.

Part of the problem is fraudulent vehicle recovery companies, car hire firms, repair shops, solicitors and doctors. By dishonestly inflating the cost of damages, they add about £30m a year to the cost of claims.

PREMIUMS UNDER PRESSURE

Call to curb carpetbaggers

PRESSURE ON the Government to change the law to prevent building societies from being forced to undergo repeated ballots on their mutual status mounted this week, as Nationwide members voted to reject calls to seek a stock-market listing.

The All Party Building Societies Group, which represents 112 MPs and Peers, is urging reforms to the rules for society elections after Nationwide faced off rebel demutualisation candidates for the second time running.

More than 2.3 million members who voted in this year's elections to the society's board backed by a 6 to 4 majority a slate favouring keeping the Nationwide mutual. They also agreed, by a far narrower majority of 35,000 votes, not to float on the stock exchange.

Under Nationwide's rule, the issue of whether to de-mu-

Nationwide's mutual status should not face annual challenges, say MPs. By Nic Cicutti

tualise does not need to be put before members for another three years. But Michael Hardern, a twice-defeated candidate for the board, and any of his supporters could in theory mount a third challenge next year. Reports suggest he is presently undecided.

Andrew Love, MP for Edmonton and chairman of the all-party group, says: "Now that Nationwide has convinced its members for two years running of the benefits of mutuality, it is time to look again at the rules surrounding building society elections. Surely it is right that fundamental decisions about the future of a mutual society should require a significant level of support before de-mutualisation."

Mr Love's comments were backed by the Building Societies Association (BSA), which represents mutual lenders. The BSA's director general, Adrian Coles, says: "It is now time building societies were allowed to get on with the business of providing competition and diversity in the financial services market place without unnecessary disruption from Johnny-come-lately speculators."

Meanwhile, Charles Nunn, chairman at Nationwide, says that despite widespread speculation about the society now being vulnerable to takeover from predators in the wake of the close vote, he has received no approaches to date. He points out that in order to

convert from a building society, three times as many people as actually voted for the conversion resolution would have to vote in favour. "I don't believe that is a mandate for conversion in any sense at all, and I hope anyone considering a predatory approach will bear that in mind."

Irrespective of any future vote, Nationwide is likely to face continuing pressure on its pledge to deliver better savings and mortgage rates than its demutualised rivals. Stephen Geraghty, managing director at Direct Line, the telephone-based financial services company, says: "The real issue is not the choice between mutual or conversion but the benefit to customers in the long term. It will be interesting to

see what happens to customers' rates now Nationwide no longer has the threat of an impending vote to manage."

Brian Davis, the society's chief executive, says the Nationwide vote was "good for all consumers in the nation" as it will retain fierce competition for the banks.

As a first step, Nationwide is pledging to reduce its interest rate margins, the difference between the rates paid by borrowers and those paid to savers, from their present 1.49 per cent rate, to 1.15 per cent within two years. If this were achieved, the rate would be more than half that of Halifax, which currently stands at 2.48 per cent.

Mr Davis adds that Nationwide will retain its current 8.1 per cent variable interest rate for borrowers beyond the initial 1 August deadline, keeping it 0.85 per cent below that charged by most rival lenders.

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Travel insurance 7
Motoring 8/9

Instant gardens 10
Age-old earners 11
A touch of glass 12

THERE WILL be more City whizz-kids than usual subsisting on a diet of take-away pizzas and cold coffee this weekend. The motive behind their feverish round-the-clock workaholicism will be to decide whether their financial institution, or the one they are advising, should mount a takeover bid for Nationwide Building Society.

Nationwide this week escaped being forced to begin the process of de-mutualisation – or of having to find a suitor for its not unattractive charms. To be sure, the vote in favour of retaining the society's mutuality was won by the narrowest of margins: 35,000 votes out of more than 2 million cast.

And so the calculation in smoky City offices may well be to go ahead with a bid for Nationwide. After all, it is one thing to vote against the idea of conversion but another to reject a cheque for £2,000 dangled in front of your nose – or so some men in wrinkled suits and gaudy braces will reason.

If so, perhaps the City men should think again. This week's ballot was not a plebiscite endorsement of Nationwide's pro-mutual strategy. But in a democracy we live by majority vote – and in this case the majority went in favour of Brian Davis and his team at Nationwide continuing with the strategy they have argued passionately in favour of for the past two or three years. They deserve the chance to carry on.

To do anything else – to invoke some higher, even spiritual, link with members, to pretend that even if they voted one way they really wanted something else – will be to reveal a profound contempt for the underlying sense of decency and the rejection of instant greed solutions that more than a million voters ultimately showed for the likes of Michael Hardern and his chums. It would mean saying: "We know you voted one



**NIC
CICUTTI**

*City men in braces
would do well
to leave the
Nationwide alone*

way, but because we believe you were wrong – and greedy – we will continue to dangle cash before your eyes until you give in."

In writing this, I am fully aware that there will be many long-standing Nationwide members who believe passionately in the merits of conversion for their society. The society's commercial success in recent years has been built on the back of their custom. I suspect, however, that they will be the ones who are most prepared to accept the majority decision given this week by their fellow-members. They may feel disappointed, but by doing so they will help ensure keener competition in the mortgage and savings market for years to come.

At the same time, I also know that there are upwards of 900,000 members who joined Nationwide in the past year or two. For many of them the primary motivation was to get and file the society's assets, to grab a fat cheque despite having contributed nothing to its growth. For now, these so-called carpathaggers have failed in their attempt.

To them, and the City men pondering their next move this weekend, I have only one message: greed doesn't always win out. Now bog off and leave Nationwide and its genuine members in peace.

Borrow for a crisis pot

FINANCIAL MAKEOVER

NAME: MARK AND CLARE JOHN AGES: 28 OCCUPATION: POLICEMAN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER



Clare and Mark John are planning their finances for the arrival of a child in September

Emma Broom

Mark is a former captain in the Royal Corps (Transport) and left the army two years ago to become a policeman. This entailed a drop in salary of about £9,000 a year.

While stationed in Germany Mark met and married his wife Clare, a primary schoolteacher and modern language expert. They both now live in Guildford, Surrey, in a cottage valued at £140,000, with a £92,000 mortgage with the Halifax. Mark has endowments which are designed to pay off the mortgage.

The couple are expecting their first baby in September. Like all new parents to be, the lives of Mark and Clare will change dramatically when their child arrives. This will mean different priorities for them both, and they know that preparing for the child's birth means assessing their financial, as well as their domestic affairs.

The Adviser: Mike Coates is partner at Optima Financial Management, 9 High Street, Harefield, Middlesex, UB8 6BX (01895 822441).

The Advice: Clearly the major item on the agenda for Mark and Clare is the arrival of their baby in September and they are worried about how this will affect their outgoings.

Having recently bought a new car, they have little cash in the building society and so the first priority for them is to create a crisis fund that will help them cope if the roof falls in.

Mark feels that they would feel much more comfortable with something like three months' net income in this pot, and so £8,000 is a good figure to aim for before spending money on other investments.

I would recommend they fund into an instant-access deposit account, where the interest, even on low amounts, will be as much as 7 per cent. There are several accounts now offering this rate of interest and I would

recommend using the Best Buy tables published in newspapers such as *The Independent* for the most up-to-date offers. After they have their £8,000 they can then look to investing in higher potential areas, as well as topping up their pensions. Their mortgage is at a high level as a multiple of their salaries. This is a legacy of Mark's time in the army, when their disposable income was higher.

Despite this, Leeds and Holbeck will accept them on a variable rate of 6.45 per cent, saving them £37 per month over their Halifax mortgage, as well as offering them a lump sum of £6,440. They must take buildings and contents with their new lender and there is a

£295 arrangement fee which can be added to the loan and a £95 application fee. The Halifax will almost certainly charge them a redemption penalty, but no more than £2,500 to £3,000, meaning they should net about £3,050 by remortgaging.

I would recommend that they save this £3,000 and the £37 per month in the instant-access account. Mark feels they could save another £50 per month on top of this, meaning they will gradually move towards a position they feel comfortable with.

In the absence of a crisis pot, I would recommend that Mark and Clare look to life assurance to replace an income if either of them were to die. They are both members of excellent

company pension schemes, both of which contain some death-in-service benefits.

If anything were to happen to Mark, Clare would receive about £54,000 from the Police Pension Fund, as well as the equity in the house and two endowment policy proceeds amounting to £100,000, making a total of £204,000. This should provide an income of about £14,280 a year assuming a return of 7 per cent, replacing about 80 per cent of Mark's income. If anything were to happen to Clare, Mark would only receive a £43,000 lump sum from her pension scheme, but the mortgage would not be paid off, and there would be no extra income for nannies and schooling. Clare could secure £100,000

life cover over 15 years for as little as £6.90 per month with Legal & General.

The wider implications of not securing adequate life cover without having capital to back up their current lifestyle might mean that Mark would have to move back to his parents or selling the house to move to a cheaper area.

The use of trusts to avoid any inheritance tax complications should they both die would also be important here, and they should consider making a will soon, as Mark's army will be now out of date.

Preserving their standard of living while alive is just as important as catering for the worst eventuality. For many

families dependent upon two incomes, the loss of one or both can be devastating. If either of them were ill long term their employer would pay them sick pay for some finite period, but there may come a time when this income stops and they are left with no salary and no prospect of generating one.

To guarantee half their monthly incomes of £750 and £896 respectively (tax free) would cost Mark £13.50 and Clare £15.65 per month through Canada Life. Both of these figures assume guaranteed premiums, meaning that regardless of the claims experience of the company or, indeed, the claims record of the individuals, the premiums are guaranteed never to rise.

Mark has two endowments, one with Friends Provident, the other with Scottish Amicable. Both these companies have strong track records but Mark should review the performance of each contract to ensure he is on target even at this early stage.

Finally, Mark and Clare both have 10-year savings plans with Sun Alliance for £70 per month taken out when Mark's salary was higher. Unfortunately, they now feel unable to afford these plans, but they will do well to keep them going. They have incurred charges up front and it is unlikely they would get back all of their investment at this time.

This does not help the Johns much, I know, but every month they battle on they are saving a little for their long-term future, knowing that at least some of their income is spent on something other than bills and baby clothes.

If you are interested in a free makeover from an independent financial adviser, worth hundreds of pounds, please write to: Andrew Verity, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5DL.

Cheap mortgages – with strings – to stay

Clifford German on the schemes with heavy redemption penalties

THE COUNCIL of Mortgage Lenders this week rejected calls for its Mortgage Code to be changed to limit or ban cheap mortgage offers with financial penalties for borrowers who repay them before a specified time.

"There is nothing inherently unfair about such a package – it is simply a form of product pricing which enables the borrower to have lower initial debt service costs than would otherwise be possible," said the CML's director general Michael Coogan after the quarterly meeting of the Council, which represents 98 per cent of all mortgage lending in the UK, on Thursday.

But he admitted more work

needs to be done to make borrowers fully aware of the penalties they face if they pay off such mortgages early. Many recent borrowers have failed to grasp that redemption penalties on special offers with strings attached can last an average of five years, effectively tying the borrower into paying the lender's standard variable rate for mortgages for years after the special deal has ended.

If redemption penalties on all future mortgage offers were abolished, however, it would greatly reduce the choice of

mortgages on offer. If borrowers were free to pay off the loans as soon as the incentives had expired, discount and cash-back mortgage offers would be withdrawn, together with all subsidised fixed-rate mortgage offers. This would leave borrowers with a limited choice of mortgages at standard variable rates or fixed rate offers at market rates.

The Council is, however, working with the Association of British Insurers and the Government to improve the system of support for borrowers who

are unable to keep up mortgage payments because of a change in their circumstances, such as illness or unemployment.

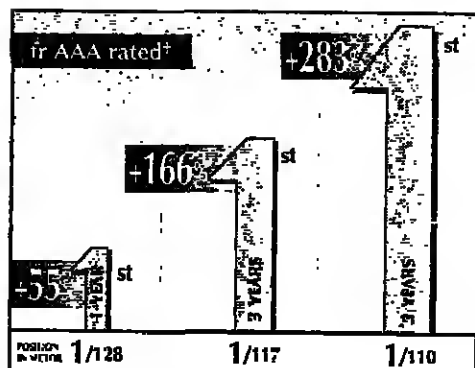
Only about 20 per cent of all current borrowers have accident sickness and unemployment policies to maintain mortgage payments if they cannot work. The conditions for payment vary considerably, especially for self-employed people.

Standardised terms, earlier starts for payment of claims and clearer boundaries between insurance policies and state help are all being considered. But there are no specific plans to help those borrowers facing early repayment penalties because they cannot keep mortgages going.

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BARGAIN BASEMENT

THE SHARE Centre, a retail stockbroker, is launching Shareview, a 24-hour pay-as-you-go telephone and fax service giving advice, together with prices and information on shares from 50 of the UK's leading companies. The service will carry a regularly-updated FTSE 100 stockmarket report. Call 0800 800008 for details.

NATIONAL MUTUAL, the pensions company, is offering a free guide to "draw-down pensions", where pensioners defer buying an annuity but take a slice of income instead, leaving the bulk of their money invested. Call 01462 426800 and quote reference 3W033.

JOHN CHARCOL, the mortgage broker, is offering six months of free unemployment cover on every home loan arranged through the firm. Call 0800 939393.

CLUB DIRECT, the travel insurer, is absorbing the 1 August increase in Insurance Premium Tax from 4 per cent to 17.5 per cent and is also cutting by 10 per cent the cost of cover across its entire range. The company's Classic policy for Euro-

pean holidays will now cost £40.41 for a family of two adults, plus unlimited numbers of children. Call 0800 074 4556.

PORTMAN BUILDING Society is increasing the rates paid on its savings accounts by up to 0.4 per cent. For example, its branch-based Instant Access Account, will pay 5.8 per cent on savings of £100 or more, a rise of 0.3 per cent. More details on 0800 807080.

SECURITISED Endowment Contracts (SEC), a broker in the traded endowment market, is cutting the initial charge on Prudence Bonds, investments from Prudence, the insurer. For investments between £6,000 and £9,999, SEC will cut initial charges from 5 to 2 per cent. For investments up to £20,000, the entire initial charge will be waived, while the company will add an extra 1.75 per cent to investments between £50,000 and £500,000. The offer closes on 31 August. Call 0181 207 1866.

ROYAL BANK of Scotland is increasing rates paid on Rainbow Savings, Cash Club and Route Seventeen, its

children's accounts, to 5.75 per cent gross. Details from branches or call 0800 121121.

THE DAVID Aaron Partnership, independent financial advisers, has published a new edition of its 42-page *Guide to European Unit Trusts*. The booklet, which normally costs £5, is available to readers of *The Independent* for £2 (p&p inc), by writing to Shelton House, High Street, Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes, MK17 8SD.

ECCLESIASTICAL Insurance Group, a charity-owned company which provides insurance for the Church of England, has produced a free guide for the clergy. The guide advises on a range of financial issues. Call 01452 334553.

ALAN BROAD Insurances, a specialist broker, is offering special contents insurance for students. Call 01865 308928 for details of all the company's policies.

IFA PROMOTION, the organisation which promotes independent financial advice, has published a free Cost of Education factsheet, outlining the options avail-

able to parents who need to pay for their children's schooling or higher education. Call 0117 971 1177 for a copy.

COLUMBUS INSURANCE is promising to absorb the August 1 increase in Insurance Premium Tax, which will rise from 4 to 17.5 per cent. Call 0171 2455505.

THE DEPARTMENT of Social Security has launched a new range of pensions education booklets, separately covering every subject from contracted-out pensions, pensions for women, the self-employed, personal occupational and state pensions. Copies are available from any DSS office.

SOLOMON HARE, accountants based in Bristol, have launched a new guide aimed at new businesses. The guide gives all aspects of preparing a business plan, including finance and marketing to management, organisation and risk factors. Copies are available from Jacqueline Robinson, Solomon Hare, Oakfield House, Oakfield Grove, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 2E. Or call 0117 923 7000.

Learn to love a duck

They began as licences for hunters in the US and became sought-after collectors' items. Now, writes John Windsor, duck stamps are flocking across the Atlantic

The eighth annual issue of British duck stamps was launched yesterday by Baroness Young, recently appointed vice-chairman of the BBC and chairman of English Nature.

Duck stamps are the latest investment collectable. They are familiar enough to the country landowners in wellies and brogues who heard the baroness's speech at their annual game fair at Stratfield Saye, the Duke of Wellington's Hampshire estate. But you will not find them in your mail.

They are non-philatelic charity issues, sold by the Wildlife Habitat Trust for a fiver each, as the best way "to invest for the future of the countryside".

To those in the know, they are also a pretty good investment in themselves. Duck stamps have taken off as a collectable in the United States, their country of origin, where they have been issued as compulsory shooting licences since 1934. There, the rarest is worth \$9,000 (more than £5,600). Americans need to buy both federal and state duck stamps in order to shoot legally.

Hitherto, "Cinderella" stamps - non-philatelic perforated labels - have been looked down on by stamp collectors. But in the United States since 1985, stamp albums that show black-and-white reproductions of new issues in the spaces where collectors are meant to display the real thing have made them a must-have. The fact that they can be bought from American post offices has also given them legitimacy among stamp collectors. They are listed in the prestigious American Scott stamp catalogue.

Britain now has its own specialist dealer in duck stamps - John Wells of Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire - and Stanley Gibbons stocks American federal issues.

In fact the British example has encouraged other countries - Ireland and Iceland, as well as countries in Europe and Scandinavia - to issue their own duck stamps. That may be better news for stamp collectors than for wildlife in the "duck factories" of the Baltic states, where money from duck stamps is financing the breeding grounds of birds that will eventually become hunters' targets.

Britain's duck stamps, at £5 face value, have so far shown a modest



increase in value. The most expensive, a 1991 first-issue, can still be had for £12.50 from Mr Wells - although it is said to have changed hands for £200 when British collectors first latched on to duck stamps and the market was still raw. Mr Wells reckons that British duck stamps are about to rise more rapidly in value than the duck stamps of America, where the market for them is long-established.

The Americans are masters of limited-edition marketing. There are not only separate duck-stamp issues for hunters and collectors, but there are now "governor's edition" duck stamps - hand-signed by state governors in very limited editions and sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Governor John Sununu, of New Hampshire, was the first to issue signed limited editions - 400 stamps in 1987. They had a hefty face value of \$50 and are listed by Mr

Wells at £357, based on prices in the Scott catalogue. The following year the governor signed only 200, now listed by Mr Wells at £841.

Like postage stamps, duck stamps have their top-price rarities. The inadvertent destruction in 1972 of most of California's duck stamps destined for collectors has made them the most valuable state duck stamp, priced by Mr Wells at £2,079.

There is also a burgeoning market for American artist-signed stamps, ranging in price from £25 to \$3,000, and for artist-signed prints of the original artwork, £30-£500. The monochrome print of the first federal duck stamp of 1934 - mallards in flight by J.N. Darling - changes hands for about \$6,000 (£2,750).

The record-price of \$9,000 for a duck stamp is one of a separate category issued by American Indian reservations. It was the first issued

by the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, showing Canada geese and with a face value of \$30, that was hardly noticed at the time.

Stanley Gibbons has a stock of federal duck stamps from 1985 priced from £10 to £24. A random tour of Mr Wells's price list shows the first 1934 federal stamp at £257 mint, £76 used (that is, signed by the hunter who bought it), £6.10 mint for the first Alabama stamp of 1979, £130.50 for the first Florida stamp of the same year and £3 for a Leech Lake Indian reservation stamp of 50 cents face value. He offers selections of 10 different ones for £25.75 and 100 for £395.

Ben Hebbert, Stanley Gibbons's thematic specialist, points out that birds are a popular specialist theme among collectors and that they have cross-over value, appealing also to collectors of American stamps.

Their collectability is also enhanced by their relatively high face value and their scarcity - issues usually number less than 2 per cent of the 50m-100m for postage stamps - and by the current popularity of wildlife art at auction.

The latest British issue, showing a pair of long-tailed ducks flying past the historic Essex port of Maldon by the marine painter and bird-book illustrator Keith Shackleton, combines bird, marine and topographical appeal. It's a fiver well spent. One for the pot, you might say.

British new-issue duck stamps are £5 (plus postage stamp) from Sales, The British Association for Shooting and Conservation, Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham LL12 0HL (01244-573000). John Wells: PO Box 222, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire EN8 8GS (01992-628761).



INTERNET INVESTOR
ROBIN AMIOT

UNLESS YOU have been hiding under a rock for the past 12 months you will be familiar with the phrase "Asian crisis".

In fact, we are more or less celebrating the first anniversary of the melt-down in Asian economies and financial markets that took the entire region by surprise in July last year. However, given the acreage of newsprint devoted to the subject you could be forgiven for being confused. Nevertheless, the "Asian contagion" in question is not a virulent strain of flu but the potential damage that might be done to your investments.

Almost anything you are likely to want to know about the economic fall-out in and from Asia is on the Asia Crisis Homepage. This is a very good example of what the WorldWide Web can do as an information tool. As individuals we may be limited to domestic sources of information. The Web is not. The Asia Crisis Homepage was originally set up as a student study aid by Nouriel Roubini, an associate professor of economics and international business at New York University, but is open for all comers to access without charge.

It is not at all fancy as websites go. For one thing, it has quite a mouthful of an address which, as you know, you will need to get exactly right otherwise you will not get to the right place. There are no graphics and the design content is nil!

What you do get, though, is copies of, or links, to news articles, analysis, information and opinion from around the world. The site has separate sections on, among other topics, sources of official data and reports, proposed policy solutions, global effects, country analyses, Japan's economic crisis and whether China will be the next domino.

Once you have read up on the latest reports from around the world on the Asia Crisis Homepage, you may want to share your thinking or test your investment theories with other investors. One of the ways you can do this is through the Global Investor Forum on International Investing.

This discussion forum is a glorified noticeboard on which you can stick your own electronic notice. It allows you to receive replies automatically to your posted messages by

e-mail. There is also an advanced keyword search facility on archives of old messages. You can also keep track of messages posted to the forum by setting up your own personal Forum Monitor. Messages satisfying keyword criteria you set will be forwarded to you automatically by e-mail.

The Global Investor site also has a Financial Book Forum, covering books on finance and investment, and a Financial Book Exchange, best described as an Internet swapmeet.

The aim of the exchange is to provide a forum where people can swap or barter financial books. The exchange is completely free, and has full search and monitor facilities in common with the site's other forums.

Global Investor's core business is as a specialist financial bookshop on the Web. Providing such a forum to allow potential clients to "trade" among themselves might seem counter-productive. However, if you cannot find the book you want on the Financial Book Exchange, Global Investor is betting that you will turn to its "normal" on-line store.

As well as its bookshop, the Global Investor site also includes a directory of financial websites and services, market reports on the world's major stock markets, a complete listing of international ADRs issued in the US, with the facility to create a customised ADR portfolio monitor, and a news service dedicated to the latest developments in finance and technology.

Asia Crisis Homepage: www.stern.nyu.edu/~nroubini/asia/AsiaHomepage.html
Global Investor Forum: www.global-investor.com/forums

To opt in or out - that is the question

Should you switch from state to private pensions? By Iain Morse

STAKEHOLDER PENSIONS, personal pensions, occupational pensions, AVCs - the lexicon of retirement planning is full to the brim with different types of schemes designed to ensure we live our final years in dignity.

As if that were not enough, there is also the question of Serps, the state earnings-related pension scheme available to all wage-earners courtesy of the Government. The real conundrum we face, however, is whether to belong to the scheme at all or simply accept a bribe, payable into a personal pension, to opt out of Serps altogether.

Serps is the additional state pension built up when an employee's Class 1 National Insurance Contributions are paid by an employer. First introduced in 1978, this pension is based on how much a person earns. Not all earnings are taken into account - only those between the lower earnings limit of £64 per week and the upper limit of £485.

The formula for entitlement is complex but depends on the average of these earnings over a person's whole working life. At present, the maximum Serps pension is about 31 per cent of eligible earnings, or around £5,000 a year.

The purchasing power of this supplement to the basic state pension is increased in line with earnings inflation up to an individual's retirement age, then increases in line with price inflation once it is being paid.

This sounds like good value but, says Steven Cameron, pensions development manager at Scottish Equitable: "Successive governments keep moving the goal posts on the final benefit to be actually paid." Estimates vary, but by 2050 the maximum real value of a Serps pension may fall from 21 to just 13 per cent of average earnings for a man retiring at age 65.

When first introduced, so-called "contracted-out rebates" were the same regardless of age, with a 2 per cent bonus for those who opted out. This made leaving Serps a better deal for the young than the old. Most of us were advised to contract out up to the age of 45, and only then to consider contracting back in.

In April last year, a new system was introduced, that involved paying higher levels of rebate to a contracted-out pension as you grow older. For the tax year 1999-2000, rebates now run from 3.4 per cent of earnings for a man or woman aged 16, up to 9 per cent for one aged 46 and above.

"This was a radical change," says Mr Black, "which moved the real value of rebates far closer to the value of Serps. If you had chosen to pay it instead. This alone made the decision to contract out more marginal."

Then came the abolition of Advanced Corporation Tax (ACT) relief, which effectively reduced the income yield from UK equities held in pension funds by 20 per cent.

"Because this applies only to UK equities, not gilts or Euro-

pean equities, its effects can be over-estimated," believes Mr Black. "But the fact remains that it will reduce growth on pension funds and therefore on the returns of contracted-out arrangements."

Estimates vary, with pension providers arguing this could result in a reduction in growth of up to 1 per cent a year. The Government Actuary disagrees, putting the figure at 0.25 per cent. After reviewing the matter, the Government has decided to increase rebates to compensate, with effect from the tax year starting 5 April, 1999.

This means that there will be a benefit shortfall for the current tax year. It is also possible to contract in or out of Serps in each current tax year, and the decision can be made at any time until 5 April.

Mr Cameron agrees that "in theory it might be worth contracting back into Serps for the current tax year, but the possible benefits are very small - we're talking some tens of pounds, not hundreds. When rebates increase in 1999, contracting-out will become just viable."

"The real issue is whether Serps will survive. If future governments move the goal posts yet again, then having your rebates paid into a contracted-out plan of your own - which can't be touched - could look like a very good idea."

There are several ways of contracting-out and building alternative provision. If you joined a contracted-out final salary scheme, where a pension is linked to income and years spent at the firm, then rebates paid up to 5 April 1997 will entitle you to a guaranteed minimum pension (GMP) at least equal to the foregone Serps entitlement.

But entitlement built up after this date is no longer related to Serps. Instead, it is based on a "reference scheme" - basically a yardstick laid down by government. If you are eligible, ask your pension trustees for an explanation of how this works, but under the new system it is possible to do better or worse than under Serps.

Employees offered membership of an "employer's money purchase scheme" can also use it to contract out, but rebates to these have been reduced to a flat rate of 4.6 per cent. "The effect of this is to reduce benefits, because the costs of running these schemes remain quite high," argues Mr Cameron.

"It looks as if the highest probable benefits from contracting out come through using an "appropriate personal pension" (APP), which lets you invest into a with-profit or managed equity fund."

Even here there are difficult choices to be made. APPs look similar to personal pensions, but taking benefit from them is subject to rules on "protected rights". This means an APP must be cashed in at the state's retirement age, and the entire fund used to buy a lifetime annuity. The annuity must allow for price inflation and, if married, a 50 per cent widow's pension.

This puts the focus on APP fund performance and charges. These can eat into the value of rebates. Look for an APP with a level charging structure, so you will not be penalised if your employment status changes, or if you contract back into Serps.

Contracting in or out of Serps depends primarily on age and income. Standard Life reckons that men older than 52 and women over 45 should contract in, but recommends taking advice from an independent financial adviser before reaching a final decision.

Who is really in control of your finances?

- (a) The Wizard of Oz
- (b) Mystic Meg
- (c) Your bank manager
- (d) You

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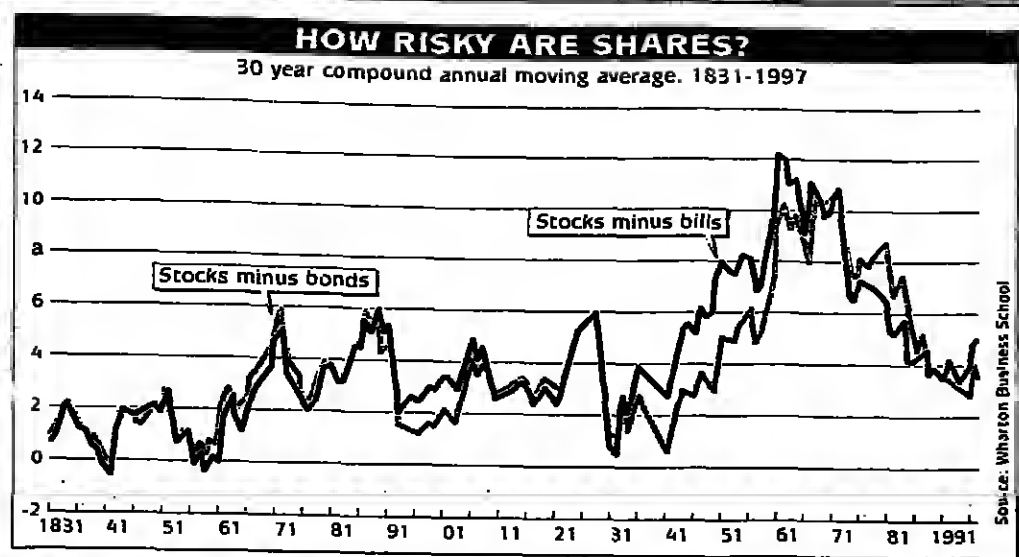
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Solving the equity premium puzzle

THE ACADEMIC community has been puzzling over the issue, so it says, since 1985. Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, has been worried about it for at least two years now (and returned to the subject again this week). *The Economist* magazine devoted three pages to analysing the subject only last week. Most people haven't a clue what the fuss is all about, since it all seems pretty obvious to anyone with any common sense. So who is right about the so-called equity premium puzzle?

Just in case you have missed this important-sounding debate, let me define a few terms. The equity premium is the fancy phrase that finance theorists dreamt up some years ago to explain the fact that investors require higher returns from shares than they do from "less risky" assets such as Treasury bills. The premium measures the difference between the returns you can expect to generate from the stock market over time and those you can expect to generate from buying a Government bond.

Thus if a short-term Government bond is currently priced to yield 6 per cent, and the stock market is offering expected returns of, say, 9 per cent per annum, the "equity premium" is said to be 3 per cent. That is the price you are effectively being paid for taking on the extra risk you incur in buying shares. The risk in this context comes from the fact that shares go up and down a lot more, and carry more credit risk, than a bond issued by the Government. (Note that all returns in this debate are assumed to be in real terms - that is, after taking account of inflation. We pass over, as only academics can, the fact that what they call a risk-free asset is really nothing but, since its value can be wiped out by inflation in very quick order.)

Now, if you are with me so far, you may have guessed by now that "the puzzle" is why the equity premium, as measured by the returns actually generated by the financial markets over the years, won't stand still. In fact, as the chart shows, the difference between the real returns produced by the stock market and those, offered by government bonds have jumped very sharply in the post-war period.

The equity premium reached a peak in the 1960s and early 1970s at about 12 per cent, but since then it has fallen quite significantly. It is now back to levels not seen since



THE JONATHAN DAVIS COLUMN

the pre-war period (when neither the risks nor potential rewards of equity ownership were anything like as well documented as they are now, and a proper analytical framework for understanding investments was still in its infancy). What has been puzzling the academic community since it first latched on to this issue some 13 years ago is why there has been such a dramatic shift in the risk that investors perceive in the stock market. Originally, the puzzle was why the equity premium had risen so high. Now the debate has turned on its head, and with the stock markets on both sides of the Atlantic at such heady levels (at least before this week's Greenspan-inspired wobble), the question has become not whether the premium is too high, but whether it is now too low, when measured against the actual risks of investing in bonds and equities.

This is important for anyone interested in assessing the current valuation of the world stock markets. If investors are right to think that the risk of holding shares has fallen dramatically, then it becomes easier (though still not that easy) to justify the market at today's stratospheric levels. If, on the other hand, investors have simply become too biased about the risks of the stock market, it implies that they could soon be in for a rude awakening.

As *The Economist* pointed out last week, the difference between assuming an equity risk premium of, say, 1 per cent and 6 per cent makes a huge difference to how fast and how long company profits have to keep on growing to justify current share prices. It could be the difference between companies growing their profits at 5 per cent and 10 per cent a year in real terms for the foreseeable fu-

ture - a huge difference in practice. The first is very feasible, the latter virtually impossible.

There is no doubt which camp Mr Greenspan is inclined towards. While at pains to emphasise that economic conditions in the United States are as good as he can remember, he has also been at pains for some time to point out the risks of investors assuming that the current "virtuous circle" of low inflation and rapid sustained growth in company profits can endure forever. As he told Congress in his testimony last week: "In recent years, continued low product price inflation and expectations that it will persist have promoted stability in financial markets and fostered perceptions that the degree of risk in the financial outlook has been moving ever lower."

"To a considerable extent, investors seem to be expecting that low inflation and stronger productivity growth will allow the extraordinary growth of profits to be extended into the distant future. These rising expectations have in turn driven stock prices sharply higher and credit spreads lower, perhaps in both cases to levels that will be difficult to sustain unless the virtuous cycle continues." (You must allow for the fact that no central banker is ever going to be caught making an entirely unequivocal statement - hence the "perhaps").

Back in the real world, of course, the "equity premium puzzle" is not quite as puzzling as the academics would have us believe. The one thing we know about markets is that in the long run they follow predictable and remarkably consistent paths. But in the short term they can behave in very irrational ways. Like any crowd, investors do swing from moods of great enthusiasm to ones of great apprehension.

At the moment everything in the sky is blue, just as everything in the 1970s looked dire and foreboding. By definition, most risks are unforeseeable - but it does not mean they are not there. The real puzzle will be if markets collectively did not go from one extreme to another. Historically, over long periods of time equities have consistently produced returns of 6 per cent to 7 per cent in real terms, which is about 3 to 4 per cent more than cash or government bonds. But most investors today, as Mr Greenspan reminded us, are betting that the future will go on being a lot better than the past for a long time.

Live and plan your finances together

Couples sharing a home should do their sums, says Andy Couchman

LIVING WITH a partner is the first life stage where a key element of financial planning is protecting others. It is also the time when, for many, long-term planning takes on a greater significance and when retirement planning is best started.

The first priority for most young couples is finding somewhere to live. At the height of the property boom in the mid-80s everyone, it seemed, was anxious to get on the property ladder. Many learned to their cost that what goes up may well not stay up and negative equity or owing more on a mortgage than the property was worth became part of our everyday vocabulary.

In the more cautious 90s many couples prefer to rent a property first. Then, building up capital that is quickly accessible will be the priority. C&G offers one of the best rates, paying 7.5 per cent on savings of £2,500, on its Instant Transfer phone account according to MoneyFacts which offers a daily updated faxback listing of top savings and mortgage rates. To access, just pick up the handset on a fax machine, dial the number and follow the automated voice instructions.

If buying, and two thirds of people now do this - the highest rate in Europe - which mortgage and which mortgage funding vehicle are both big decisions. One option is to pay interest only and have a mortgage endowment or PEP to repay the mortgage. Those with a

pension plan could pay off the mortgage from their cash lump sum when they retire. An endowment is the simplest route because life assurance and critical illness cover can be built in whereas the others require separate life assurance.

A cheaper and arguably better bet is a capital and interest loan where the mortgage debt gradually reduces, usually being paid off over 25 years. The downside is not getting a lump sum at the end of the mortgage. According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders, 41 per cent of first time buyers now choose this route. Endowments come second, with 34 per cent, but have decreased in popularity as with profit bonus rates have fallen, reflecting lower investment returns and interest rates.

Around one in three borrowers adds mortgage payment protection insurance, typically costing around £5-7 a month per £100 of monthly mortgage payment. This protects mortgage payments against unemployment, illness or disability - but usually only up to a year.

When it comes to borrowing money, the general rule is that the more you can put down the better, particularly now that many lenders do not charge a mortgage indemnity guarantee (MIG) premium if you borrow less than 95 per cent of the value of your property. Some lenders will offer up to 102 per cent of the property value according to Andy Young, director of Esprit Mortgage

Network, which only operates through independent financial advisers. That could help towards legal fees and stamp duty.

"Many high street lenders will no longer offer 100 per cent mortgages, but secondary lenders such as Mortgage Express (part of Bradford & Bingley) and Verso (part of Britannia) offer good value for money. Rates are around 8.75-8.95 per cent currently but 100 per cent borrowers usually lose out on the discounts, cashback and fixed interest rates offered by other lenders," says Andy Young.

The MIG could cost up to 12 per cent of the amount borrowed above 75 per cent of the property value, so on a 100 per cent mortgage on a flat costing £55,000 that would be £1,800. MIGs give no benefit to the borrower, only indemnifying the lender against the risk of default - another reason to avoid it if possible.

"You can generally borrow up to 3.25 times your income or 2.75 times your joint income but do make sure that you can afford the repayments, even if interest rates rise," warns Andy Young.

Life insurance is one of the few types of insurance that has actually gone down in recent times. One of the latest to cut its rates - by up to a third - is Canada Life. Diana Harding, manager for protection, says that £100,000 of mortgage protection for 25 years now costs just £7.50 a month for a 25 year old man,

provided he does not smoke. A woman five years older would pay just 30p a month more.

As well as life cover, critical illness, which provides a cash lump sum on suffering a serious illness, and income protection, which provides an income if you cannot work due to long term illness or disability can be valuable as can private medical insurance if the budget can afford it.

This is also a good time to start a pension. For many, this will be through their employer's scheme but if that is not available, or they are self-employed, a personal pension not only builds up a fund for the future but attracts tax relief too.

A final but often overlooked element of financial planning is writing a will and considering an enduring power of attorney. Both will typically cost less than £100 and may be offered by the solicitor looking after the conveyancing on buying that first home.

MoneyFacts Savings Selection: 0336 400238; **Mortgage Selection:** 0336 400239 (faxback calls cost 50p a minute at all times, typically around £4 in total); C&G: 0800 742437; Canada Life: 01707 651122. For a list of independent financial advisers near you call IFA Portfolio on 0111 971 1177.

Andy Couchman is publishing editor of *HealthCare Insurance Report*

Free crisps are not enough

Firms now offer fringe benefits to loyal investors. By Guy Dennis

FANCY A cheap suit? A discounted holiday? Free fish and chips? Or as many salt and vinegar crisps as you can eat at one sitting? All it takes is to be a shareholder in companies providing these goods and services.

More than 100 companies now offer perks, often in the form of reductions on their products, to reward loyalty and encourage people to hold their shares.

For example, shareholders in Arcadia Group are entitled to a 12.5 per cent discount on their purchases up to £5,000 per year from shops owned by the company. These include Dorothy Perkins, Burton Menswear, Evans, Principles, Top Shop, Top Man and Racing Green.

Ladbroke offers discounts on stays in the Hilton Hotels it owns, while investors in Harry Ramsden, ownership of 500 or more shares also means an extra perk: they qualify for a twice-yearly free-fish gala at its main shop in Guiseley, Yorkshire.

However, anyone tempted to buy shares purely for the perks should beware. Arcadia's deal involves buying at least 2,000 shares, an investment of more than £7,000. Plus, shareholders must use an in-store credit card.

Investors should also note that they may forego shareholder benefits if their shares are held in nominee accounts, rather than being registered in their own name.

Peter Hargreaves, managing director of Hargreaves Lansdown, advises most investors to register shares in their own name. But even if shares are registered in your name, the onus is on you to look for the perks. Investors should check,



FIVE OF THE BEST

Whitbread: Coupons with the annual report in May give a discount of 10-15 per cent at *Cafe Rouge*, *TGI Friday's*, *Thresher* and *Marriott* leisure and golf breaks.

Next: A 25 per cent discount voucher is issued with the annual report in April to shareholders with minimum of 500 shares. Recipients can use the discount on as many items as they like purchased in one visit.

Ladbroke Group: A range of discounts are offered on Hilton Hotels, including 10 per cent off published room tariffs and 10 per cent off food and drinks.

Debenhams: Shareholders with at least 2,000 shares get a 12.5 per cent discount on purchases worth up to £5,000 per year.

Gieves Group: Investors with a minimum of 600 shares get a 20 per cent discount on clothing and shoes.

using the guides, if they want to be sure of reaping the rewards.

The extent to which some perks may entice you to buy shares is a matter of judgement. The Barclays guide lists free samples of Bensons Crisps on offer at the company's AGM: it is debatable whether a

price of any BA flight. But competitive travel agents offer far greater discounts on flights than this.

Also, although perks play a role, shares should always be bought on the basis of solid financial performance.

Restrictions on perks do much to limit their appeal and practical value. Many companies require investors to hold a minimum number of shares to qualify for benefits. In one sense this is a drawback, but at the same time the benefits offered tend to reflect the minimum number of shares required; more shares as a minimum often means more benefit.

Another common restriction means that shareholder benefits cannot be used in conjunction with other discounts, such as sales and special offers. This might be expected, but these other discounts may sometimes be worth more than any perk.

Perks change over time and may only be issued at certain times of the year. For example, discounts issued in the form of money-off vouchers are often only distributed once a year with the annual report, so you would have to be a shareholder at the right time in order to benefit. And you may have to hold shares for a minimum period of time to qualify.

Attractive Perks for UK Shareholders: from Hargreaves Lansdown, costs £3, but readers of *The Independent* can obtain a free copy by calling 0800 550 661. 'Shareholder Benefits', from Barclays Stockbrokers, can be obtained free by calling 0345 777 400

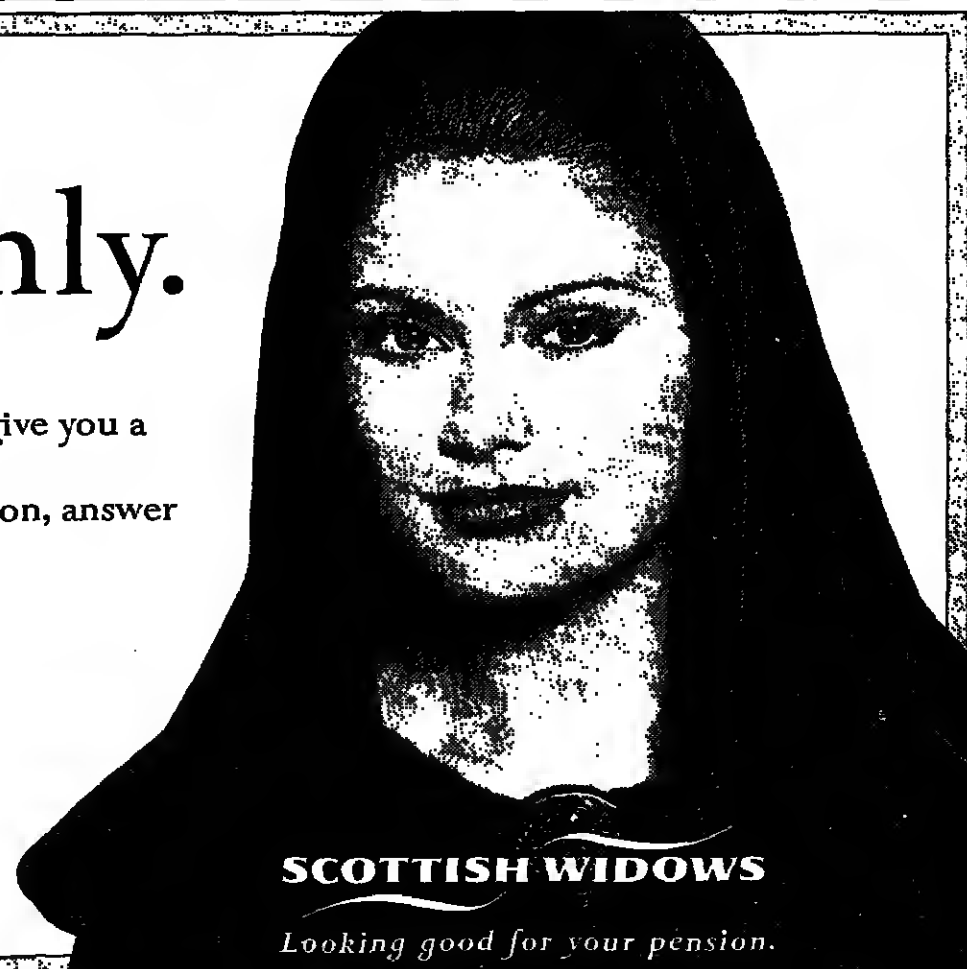
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Travel insurers wage war on fraud

**Holiday claim
cheats are coming
under greater
scrutiny, writes
Vicky Trapmore**

Precariously balanced on a log crossing a rapidly flowing river in the jungle, Dave slipped. He managed to catch hold of the log, but his bag ripped as he fell and his passport, wallet and plane tickets fell into the rushing water below. He managed to get to dry land, but had no hope of retrieving his dropped items.

Sounds improbable? Every year, travel insurance companies deal with millions of claims which range from the ordinary to the somewhat implausible, like Dave's situation - which is in fact true. It is down to the insurance company to trust the claimant, and the claimant to provide as much evidence as possible to back up their story. Sadly, many people use this as an opportunity to commit fraud.

In 1997, fraudsters claims cost insurance companies around £50m. The flipside of all those freebies is that insurance premiums increase in order to cover the costs. The honest traveller ends up shelling out because some holidaymakers cheat the system.

This year, the Association of British Insurers (ABI), which represents the industry, is spearheading a crackdown on fraud. Travellers who report items as allegedly stolen can expect to have their hotel rooms searched, and to be severely reprimanded if "lost" or "stolen" items are found, says Tony Baker, the ABI's deputy director general.

Potential fraudsters should beware - an internal database shared between all insurers means that each claim is carefully checked to ensure it has not already been made on another policy. A traveller was discovered and convicted for falsely claiming the loss of 33 suitcases over three years. The cases had "disappeared" from planes, trains, ferries and motorway service areas. The common feature was that each suitcase contained scuba diving gear.

Despite its increased toughness against suspected fraudsters, the industry denies suggestions from



some travellers that it deliberately rejects claims on its policies. In 1997, an estimated half a million people returned from holiday and made claims on their travel insurance. The rejection rate is low: Thomas Cook claims it examines barely 1 per cent of claims on its policies.

But some customers do still find their legitimate claims rejected. One reason is that the claimant is unfamiliar with the details of the insurance policy. Suzanne Moore of ABI has the following advice for travellers: "It is important to be clear about what you are buying when you buy it." Take time to read the small print, and make sure you are aware of the extent of the cover you are buying. Do not hesitate to question your insurance company about anything that is unclear.

Ms Moore adds: "The person

selling the cover has a responsibility to tell you what the conditions are, so that you are aware of possible limitations." More adventurous sports such as bungee jumping, for example, are not covered on many standard policies.

If you are planning to do anything more energetic on holiday than lie on the beach, check with your insurer to verify that you are covered. Picking up a jet-ski for an experimental ride could cost your holiday money in medical bills if something goes wrong: the sport is considered "adventurous" and is not covered under some policies. Winter sports usually require additional insurance.

Arrange your insurance as far in advance of your holiday as possible. Many policies will refund the cost of the holiday in the event of something happening to prevent you from

going on holiday. This could be a death in the family, job loss or even jury service.

The medical conditions side of travel insurance is another potential problem area. Many standard policies will not cover people with pre-existing medical conditions, or those who have been under medical treatment in the 90-day period prior to the holiday. If you are going abroad for convalescence purposes, the medical part of your insurance is nullified.

There are, however, policies that offer cover for these situations. Mike Williams, of the British Insurance and Investment Brokers Association (BIBA), recommends getting insurance from a broker: "It is important to shop around for travel insurance policies. Not only are there enormous differences in

price, but a broker will find a policy tailor-made to suit the customer's requirements. Issues such as age limitations and medical conditions are often overlooked."

When making a claim it is important to have as much documentation as possible to support it as insufficient evidence could lead to it being rejected. Instructions will be in the policy documentation - make sure you take this with you. Try not to exaggerate the claim: insurance companies treat them as fraudulent.

One reason why claims are sometimes rejected is on the grounds that claimants did not take reasonable care of their items. Running around the beach filming your friends with an expensive camcorder, and then "hiding" it under a towel when you all go for a dip in the sea, is not con-

sidered "reasonable care". Leaving items in cars can also be tricky, and many insurance policies stipulate that items must be locked in the boot or hidden from view under a top cover in an estate or a hatchback. The glove compartment is not considered safe.

Another area to remember is claims excesses. They exist to keep down the cost of the premium, and to ensure that claims are serious. When making a claim you may be charged an excess for every section of the policy that you claim for. For example, claiming for a stolen bag that contained money and a camera could induce excess charges for the baggage claim, the valuables claim and the cash and personal money claim. Some brokers' policies, however, promise to charge only one excess fee per claim.

WHAT YOU NEED TO MAKE A CLAIM

IF YOU do need to make a claim, remember that the more documented evidence you can provide, the more likely your claim is to be met.

- Take a copy of the policy on holiday to refer to for claims, information and emergency phone numbers.
- Keep a copy of all receipts and relevant documents.
- To cancel your holiday before going owing to illness, get a doctor's certificate as proof.
- In the event of a medical emergency abroad, contact the insurance company as soon as possible, and keep all relevant documents including receipts for anything you have paid for up front, so you will be able to prove what happened.
- If your luggage is stolen, report it within 24 hours, and get a police report. This must be written - a crime reference number is not necessarily enough.
- Keep all receipts for purchases made to replace those items you have lost or had stolen.
- If your luggage is delayed or lost in transit, the carrier should supply a "property irregularity report".
- If you lose your passport, contact the British Consulate.
- If an accident involves you, do not pay for anything or accept responsibility until you have contacted your insurer. Again, get a police report and getting statements from any witnesses present is also a good idea.

The dispute resolver

AS INSURANCE companies become ever more wary of fraud, it can be difficult for people to get genuine claims accepted.

In this area of potentially unresolved conflict, it is the job of the Insurance Ombudsman to try and steer in the direction of justice when disputes arise. Yet while it makes sense to look for insurance companies covered by the Ombudsman, and most UK insurers are now members of the scheme, few people know what it does or how it works.

Using the Ombudsman to settle a dispute is a much more attractive proposition than costly legal battles. Among the disputes the Ombudsman is called to resolve, travel insurance claims are among the highest in number.

Travel insurance, a complex product, is often sold by travel agents who know little about insurance. Problems may also crop up when travel insurance cover overlaps with existing insurance, such as home contents policies that already protect an individual's possessions. In addition, there are many

If a claim is rejected, go to the Ombudsman. By Guy Dennis

variations between different travel policies.

The stated aim of the Insurance Ombudsman Bureau (IOB) is to "provide an independent and impartial method of resolving certain disputes between insurers and individual policy holders". In practical terms, if your insurance claim is rejected then you can call on the Ombudsman to propose a solution.

The Ombudsman's decisions are not legally binding and they can be rejected, but this is very unlikely on the insurers' part. No insurance company has ever rejected the verdict of the Ombudsman, although in the past they have tried to use the courts to limit his powers.

In the case of consumers, their seemingly-justified claims can still be rejected, although to some extent this is inevitable. There will be people who have claims rejected because they have not understood the terms of their insurance - quite simply,

a mistake has been made. Less commonly, fraudsters have actually submitted claims to the Ombudsman in the hope that it will unknowingly assist them in their crimes.

But this still leaves the central issue: does the Ombudsman provide decisions that satisfy honest consumers who struggle to get their claims accepted? More than 53,000 cases have been settled since the Bureau was set up in 1981.

As far as travel insurance is concerned, the Ombudsman considered almost 250 claims in 1997. Of these, some 41 per cent were "revised" by insurers after the Ombudsman's intervention. The biggest areas where companies were forced to change tack being related to delays in settling claims (56 per cent), plus claims that the customer did not take "reasonable care", usually of possessions lost or stolen on trips.

The Ombudsman's Bureau claims there are hardly any

cases where its decisions have been rejected by members of the public who have then received a more favourable outcome from the courts. And it also stresses its independence, saying this is guaranteed by its council, which represents relevant bodies such as the Consumers Association.

Michael Lovegrove at the IOB says the Ombudsman can even provide reasonable decisions where the law seems unfair: "The Ombudsman may conclude that the strict legal position is that the claim fails, but we sometimes stand back from that and say well look, that may be the strict legal position but the result wouldn't be fair."

Don't forget, in the event of a dispute, you have nothing to lose by calling on the Ombudsman. The service is free, and for the really determined the courts are still available.

Insurance Ombudsman Bureau: 0845 600 6666. Booklet "How can the Insurance Ombudsman Bureau help me?" giving practical advice about its services, is available from the same number

The Corporate Bond PEP

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FURTHER PROOF that car bosses live on another planet, and only visit earth to collect their share options, comes with news that many car companies are planning to compete with Rolls-Royce in the top-end, super-luxury sector.

This is surprising for a host of reasons. First, car makers are being encouraged by governments to be as green and as cuddly as possible. Launching vast 18ft long V12-powered behemoths is not exactly in keeping with the public zeitgeist. And second, the market for these leather-and-chrome clad monsters is tiny and getting even tinier as South East Asia, the one part of the world where conspicuous consumption is still fine, slides further down the economic abyss.

Hang economic common sense! Car makers are queuing up to knock Rolls-Royce's Flying Lady off her perch and no amount of earthly logic seems to be deterring them.

Volkswagen's recent purchase of Rolls-Royce has been the catalyst. Volkswagen itself has promised to boost production of the Crewe-built cars from the current minuscule 2,000 a year to 10,000 - more than three times the number of cars that Rolls built at the peak of Thatcher/Reagan wear-your-wealth years.

Volkswagen's plan to dominate the car buying world of the super-rich does not end with Rolls-Royce.

Volkswagen boss Ferdinand Piech has suggested that, on top of Rolls-Royce, Volkswagen may resurrect one of its redundant brand names to use for a new German-built luxury barge.

Horch, which became part of the Audi group (in turn, swallowed by Volkswagen), has been mooted. The fact that, in English, Horch is pronounced like "horse" does not seem to be deterring the good Dr Piech, a man who is renowned for his single-mindedness. The talk is, perhaps, of only 50 Horches a year.

Not to be outdone, BMW - which was beaten by Volkswagen in the race for Rolls - has been dropping all sorts of un-subtle hints that it too wants a slice of the very top layer of the car buying cake.

Volkswagen may build a super luxury car in Germany, which some pundits are suggesting could be called a Napier, which is a famous old British car name. Or just as likely, it may build a new top-end car in Britain, possibly resurrecting one of the old Rover Group names such as Riley. This would represent a full frontal assault on Rolls-Royce.

Anything BMW and Volkswagen do, then Mercedes-Benz can do better (or so Mercedes-Benz, not renowned



GAVIN GREEN

Rolls-Royce's biggest customer is the Sultan of Brunei and it has been claimed that without his custom Rolls wouldn't have survived this long

for having a low opinion of itself, likes to think). Not surprisingly then, it too plans to jump into the market aimed at plutocrats, peers and Third World politicians. It has already shown, at various international motor shows, a new super-luxury car called the Maybach.

At this stage, the car is in prototype form only. When most experts saw it, they urged Mercedes-Benz to bid for Rolls-Royce, on the basis that, if Mercedes bought Rolls, the world would be spared the Maybach. Sadly, the Maybach - a vast, bloated, bulbous behemoth - is destined for the garages of the very rich, starting in about 2000.

As with most of the upcoming "super cars", the Maybach is likely to use a V12 engine, will cost well over £100,000, and will be lucky to exceed 10mpg.

The question nobody seems to be asking is, exactly who is going to buy these mink-coated monsters? Rolls-Royce's biggest customer is the Sultan of Brunei, and it has been claimed that, without the Sultan's continuing custom during economic downturns, Rolls may not have survived this long.

Nobody is really sure how many Rolls-Royces the Sultan owns, including probably the Sultan himself. But it runs into the hundreds. No doubt he will be tempted by the Maybach, the Horch, the Riley, the Napier and whatever new Bentley and Rolls-Royce models VW is planning. But outside of Brunei, the customer base looks thin.

Perhaps - in keeping with their other-worldly lifestyles - the car bosses of today know of some untapped alien car market? Who knows, maybe the Martians like the look of Maybach.

New life in the Laguna

Renault has pepped up its company car range. John Simister is impressed



Seeing is believing: at last the Renault Laguna is a car you might really want to own

If Charles Darwin were alive today, maybe he would drive a Renault Laguna. That is what you might conclude if you were to buy into the car's current advertising campaign, anyway. It is all about evolution, how the Renault Laguna, a species first discovered in 1994 and recently slipping down the pecking order in the company car jungle, has had its genes pepped up to make it a car you might really want to own.

We are led to believe that the Laguna's win in last year's British Touring Car Championship has something to do with this, although the racing Lagunas are really little more than an image-building exercise. However, there has long been an uncomfortable mismatch between the Renault's high-profile race-track prowess and the driving excitement of the road-going versions. To put it bluntly, the performance of their engines has ranged from unexceptional to downright torpid.

This is why, despite the Laguna's excellent handling, comfortable ride, good looks, low prices and high equipment levels, it has not figured highly on a keen driver's wish-list. That said, the Laguna has sold well, particularly to company fleets: it is the third-most popular car in its class, after the Ford Mondeo and the Vauxhall Vectra.

Now, four years into its life, the

Renault Laguna RTi Sport V6

Engine: 2.946cc V6, 24 valves, 194bhp at 5,750rpm.
Transmission: five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive.
Performance: 146mph, 0-60 in 7.5sec, 21-26mpg

Rivals

Alfa 156 2.5 V6: £22,238.
Seldom has a saloon looked as

SPECIFICATIONS

gorgeous or sounded quite as sweet, but the V6's performance is disappointing despite the six-speed gearbox.

Ford Mondeo ST24: £21,495.
Rapid and fun to drive. If you forego the mesh-and-spoilers go-faster styling you can save £2,000, but only on the four-door version.

Vauxhall Vectra GSi: £20,520.
Developed in the UK and designed to boost the Vectra's humdrum image, but feels lumpy and sluggish unless you work the engine hard.

Volkswagen Passat Syncro V6: £23,995. A 30-valve engine and four-wheel drive transmission make this a quick and sure-footed car. It's like an Audi A4, but with more space.

Laguna has gained a new range of engines. The mainstream four-cylinder versions get 16 valves at last, and there is a tasty new V6 version to cash in on the BTCC cachet. You can recognise the evolved Lagunas by their new headlights with plain instead of patterned lenses, by a new under-bumper air intake with round driving lights on some versions, and by the revised rear light lenses which eschew the early 1990s trend for smoked glass by reverting to conventional colours.

Trivial stuff, yes. More important is that the new 1.6-litre, 16-valve engine in the lowliest Lagunas is more powerful, smoother and more economical than the 1.8-litre, eight-valve motor that used to prop up the

range. Power rises from 95bhp to 110, and despite the Laguna's bulk it gives an entertainingly lively drive. The old engine used to lose interest at high revs, but this one is eager to play. It will be fitted to a sporty version of the new Clio later in the year and the combination promises to be a good one.

Next up is a 1.8-litre, 120bhp version of the same engine, but the 2.0-litre 16V is a Volvo-built engine as before. There is also a new 1.9-litre, direct-injection turbodiesel. For various reasons, doubtless tied up with company car hierarchies, the old 2.0-litre "eight"-valve petrol engine continues to be available as well.

Most interesting of all, though, is the new RTi Sport 3.0 V6. This

uses the 24-valve, 194bhp engine that was designed by Peugeot but is built in a Peugeot/Renault joint-venture factory. We've already seen this unit in the Peugeot 406 and the Citroën Xantia, and also in a plush version of the pre-facelift Laguna with automatic transmission, but this budget Laguna hot-rod is a new departure. It has manual transmission, the better to make use of the power on offer, and at £18,020 it costs only £1,600 more than the 2.0 16V Renault claims that there is no faster car on sale under £20,000.

If you want your car to bask further in the reflected glory of the Renault racers, for £500 you can add a set of OZ Supertourismo wheels modelled on those the racers use.

The result of all this is a thoroughly beguiling car, whose engine emits a crisp bark when worked hard and thrusts the Laguna along the road as no road-legal Laguna has ever been thrust before.

Being French, the Renault handles bends with a flowing motion that other car-making countries' engineers still find elusive. It soaks up bumps with a similar fluidity, although those OZ wheels with their squat, low-profile tyres jitter a little over pimply surfaces, which is the price you pay for the crisp, accurate steering. All of this is welcome news; even better is that you have a car whose mechanical credentials match those of expensive German rivals while costing several mortgage payments less.

True, the cabin is more obviously plastic and some of the detail finish is not to Audi or BMW standards, but the Laguna is a good-looking car with its fierce snout and its double-cowled dashboard. You get automatic air-conditioning, electric windows, an electric sunroof and a CD player, too, plus a voice synthesiser to warn you if something is not as it should be. Fortunately, it speaks only when it has something useful to say. Should you feel lonely on a long drive, though, you can press a button and hear "Welcome. The vehicle computer is now checking systems for you." I favour the solitude option myself.

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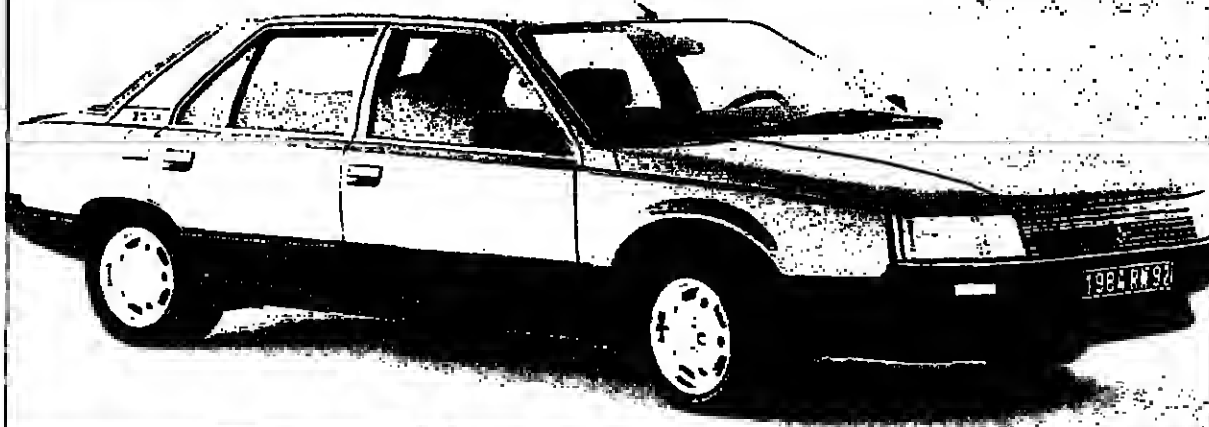
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The Renault 25TX: such an attractive package and so truly terrible

MY WORST CAR

KEVIN WOODFORD'S RENAULT 25

A comedy of terrors

MY FIRST car was a 1958 Ford Popular, which was brilliant. My worst car, though, was a Renault 25TX which was truly terrible. Yet it seemed like such an attractive package. It was a typically French car with soft velour seats and also very luxurious with power everything.

However, I swear that on occasions it would become possessed and deliberately try to play me up. Probably the worst incident was on a trip to Switzerland for a family skiing holiday. On the autoroute it was superb, motoring along on cruise control and not a worry in the world.

Then as we begin to ascend the mountains the car starts to cut out. Now we are at 9,000 feet, I'm negotiating hairpin bends and there is a sheer drop on my right-hand side.

Because the engine is stalling I am losing power steering and power brakes. But I don't let on to my family, who are sitting back enjoying the view. All I could do was rev the engine hard to keep it running, then drive into the corner and somehow man-handle it out the other side.

I start to perspire even now, just thinking about it. When we reached our destination I had the car checked out. The mechanics found nothing wrong. Then when I drove home the same thing happened again. Terrifying. It didn't behave itself back home either. If the weather was the slightest bit damp, it would refuse to start. The only cure was putting a blanket over the engine. On one occasion though, my wife borrowed it, didn't realise the blanket was on and it caught alight after 20 miles. It was funny, but that Renault

seemed to know if I was running late and would play up, just to be difficult. It didn't matter what preparations I made the car always bit back, leaving me stranded just a few yards from home trying to bump start this huge car getting more irate by the minute.

On another family holiday we needed to catch the early morning ferry to France. So I did the sensible thing, drove down the night before to Dover and even put the Renault in a dry garage overnight. And would it start?

Course not, we missed the ferry, have learnt my lesson and now drive Jaguars, which so far have never let me down.

Kevin Woodford is co-presenter of "Can't Cook Won't Cook", weekdays on UK Style at 2.30pm and 9pm. He was talking to James Ruppert

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Welcome to used car country

August and September will be good months to buy second-hand cars, as the annual registration change means that forecourts are flooded with traded-in models. These are 10 of the best buys. By James Ruppert

Car dealers everywhere will be choking back the tears this 1 August. It will be the last time that the registration prefix will be changed annually before a biannual and then an all-new system is introduced for the millennium.

At the moment, nobody knows how this will affect used car values. For the next few months, though, as hundreds of drivers collect their brand new S-registration vehicles, it will be business as usual.

That means hundreds of thousands of part-exchanges cluttering up forecourts and auctions and used car values dipping even lower. As ever, August and September look like great months to buy and here are 10 used cars we think you should be taking a closer look at.

Fiat Cinquecento
Small cars are all the rage at the moment, but when the Polish-built Fiat Cinquecento was launched in 1993, its only mass market rival was the Mini. By comparison, the Fiat is much more comfortable, with a practical hatchback, remarkable 50mpg economy and useful amounts of performance, especially the Sporting model, and real personality. It was recently replaced by the Fiat Seicento. Prices for the older model are set to drop further. Early examples can be bought for £1,500, though £3,000 secures some tidy 1995 and 1996 models. The trim is flimsy and some owners may have skipped service schedules.

Citroen ZX
Recently replaced by the new Xsara, the old ZX may have boring styling, but it was never less than great to drive and hugely practical to own. Performance from the smallest 1.4 litre is brisk, while the ride and handling is superb for a car in the medium hatchback class. For many owners, the turbo diesel engine is the best option, being flexible, fast and returning great mpg figures. The fact is that Citroen dealers do not want ZXs any more and prices have never been lower. You can pay just over £2,000 for a high mileage 1.4 litre. Tidy 1995 models are no more than £4,000.

Ford Mondeo
In the family saloon and hatchback sector, Ford proved its pre-eminence with the highly-accomplished Mondeo, introduced in 1993. A facelift and revamp in 1996 made it even better. All Mondeos are spacious, fun to drive and very durable. Running costs are reassuringly low too. At this time of year lots are released from company fleets and there is large oversupply of nearly-new examples under a year old. No one ever made a mistake by investing in a Mondeo. Early examples now cost around £3,000. The 1996 models start at £7,000. The choice is huge, so there is no need to feel rushed.



Vauxhall Omega: the best equipment, space and driving enjoyment this side of a BMW 5 series

Vauxhall Omega
Badge snobbery in the company car park, means that many turn their noses up at the Omega, which offers the best equipment, space and driving enjoyment this side of a BMW 5 series. It will cover six-figure mileages with ease and has acres of interior space. Best of all, this fleet market executive depreciates like stone. High mileage, 1994, 2.0 litre saloon versions cost less than £5,000 and estates maybe £500 more. A very well-equipped CD model starts at just over £7,000, while 2.5 litre V6s, which in CD form cost £22,500 in 1995, will now cost just over £9,000.

Ford Galaxy
Over the past three years, the choice of people carriers has multiplied more than fourfold. One of

the best, because of its car-like driving qualities, is the Ford Galaxy. Although you can also buy it badged as a VW Sharan, or Seat Alhambra on the used market, the huge numbers of Fords in circulation has meant that prices and demand for the Ford-branded version has softened, so there are bargains to be had, especially the highly equipped Ghia and Ghia X versions. Two litre versions with high mileages cost around £8,000, rising to around £20,000 for a thirsty V6 or frugal diesel.

Nissan Terrano
The 4x4 market has become the latest fashion victim. As buyers downsize to lifestyle estates and MPVs, the old dinosaurs start to clutter up the used market. While Land Rover

Discoveries and Vauxhall Fronteras are best avoided, the more reasonably sized and easy-to-drive Nissan Terrano now makes even more sense. This is especially so if you do plan to go off-road, or tow something. Also badged as a Ford Maverick, the Nissan is comfortable to drive on the road with plenty of space inside, although the three-door is a bit tight for luggage space. Prices start at £7,000 for a 1993 model rising to around £12,000 for a 1996 diesel.

Mercedes S Class
Although all Mercedes make sound used buys because of their durability and easy re-sale, rarely are they bargains. Well, the huge and hugely competent limousine which sold poorly can now be picked up for what

is, in Mercedes terms, a song. These comfortable and capable cars outpoint most of their rivals. Although a V8, or V12-powered example is probably way over the top for most tastes, a small 6 cylinder offers some semblance of economy. Prices for the entry-level S280 is around £16,000 for a 1993 model, a longer 300SEL is £19,000 and a 600SEL, which originally cost £39,000, starts at under £27,000.

Vauxhall Calibra
As coupé buyers are currently flocking to buy cheap Japanese imports, many are forgetting about the competent home market coupés like the Calibra. Although based on an old Cavalier, that is no bad thing because the now-discontinued model is tough, reliable, easy to drive and

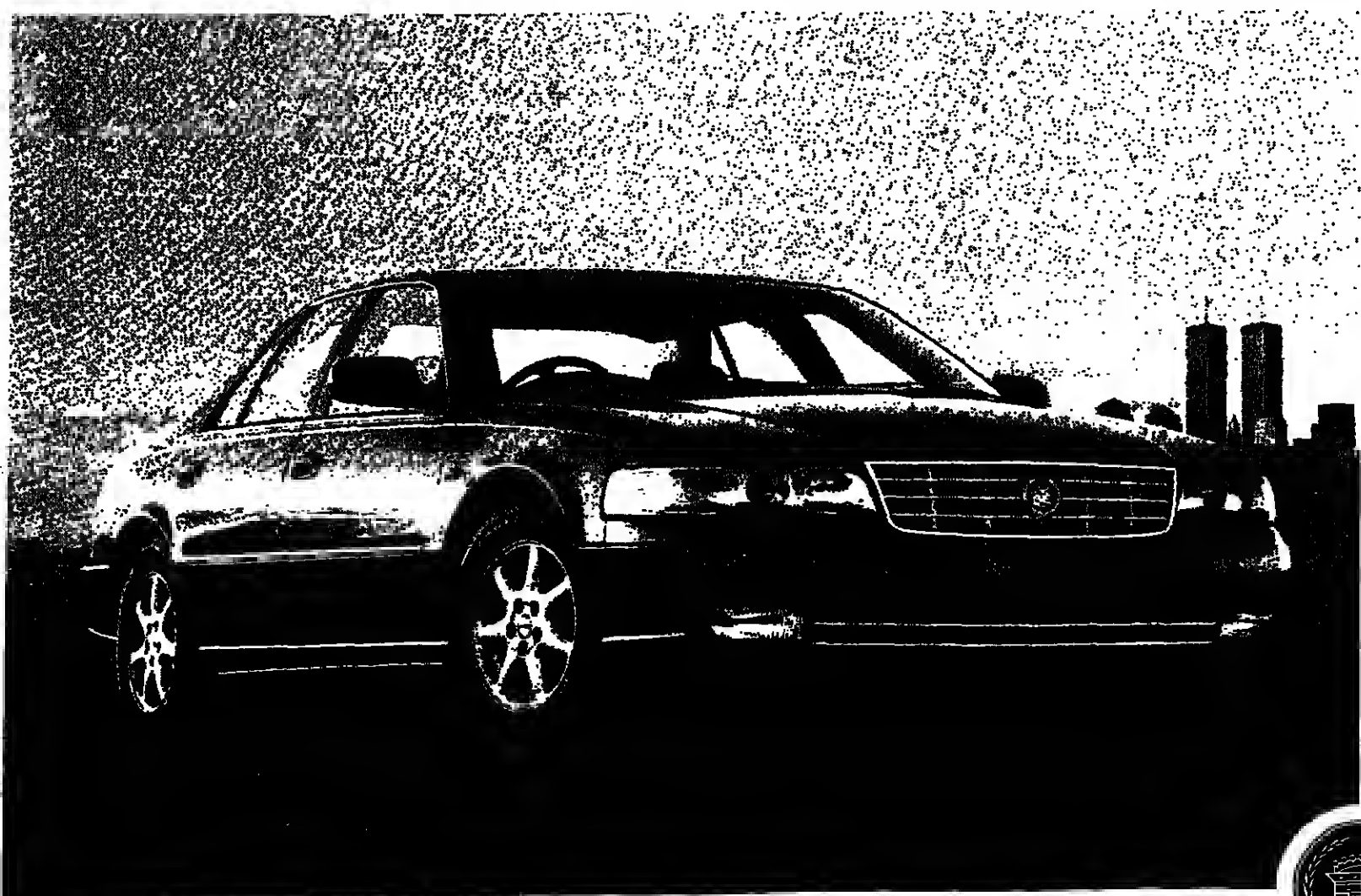
cheap to run. Values have been dropping after the last few months and it is now possible to buy early 1990 examples for under £4,000. Better, though, to consider an air bag-equipped 1993 16 valve model at £5,500. Also worth considering is the bargain turbo model, which also has four-wheel drive and costs just over £9,000 for a 1994 example.

Audi A4
For a long time, the BMW 3 series was unchallenged in the compact executive market - until the Audi came up with the A4. While the 3 series, which is replaced this autumn, refuses to depreciate, A4s, particularly low-specification ex-company examples, are now around in large numbers. Prices start at around £8,000 for a high-mileage 1995 1.6

litre, while a turbo Sport will be just over £11,000 and a silky 2.6 litre just over £10,000.

Nissan Primera Estate
Few middle market cars have been as nice to drive or as well built as the old model Primera. In particular, the crisp 2.0 litre engines offered plenty of power and they never felt anything less than totally solid. Those are qualities you particularly need in an estate car and the overlooked Primera version is rugged, spacious and will last as long as you want it to. It is also undervalued. Prices start at just over £3,000 and just a few hundred needs to be added for the top of the range SLX. A facelifted and air-bagged 1995 model which cost £15,000 new, now costs little more than £5,500 after having covered 50,000 miles.

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Growing without the pains

Traditionally gardens have been a labour of love; but now horticulturalists have caught up with the labour-saving revolution. By Rosalind Russell

Plurists will say there is no such thing as an instant garden. But they may not have met Jim Dawes. The Middlesex-based horticulturalist can put years on you.

Or, more precisely, your home. Jim works for a specialist nursery producing larger size specimen plants for home owners who need to buy time.

Not everybody can spend years waiting for a garden to mature, especially people who have to move house often with their job. And it is frustrating to leave well-stocked borders behind to a new owner, only to take over what a developer describes optimistically as a landscaped garden (for that, read a few square yards of turf and a shrub).

Whether it is an old house looking exposed once the previous owners

have gone off with all the patio pots, or a newly built house with hard edges and a raw, fenced plot, mature plants will quickly establish its credentials.

"We can even put in a 5m-high wisteria," says Jim, who advises clients of Tenderscare, based near Uxbridge in Middlesex. "I connect all the cables to the wall first, dig the hole, then spread out the plant on the ground and connect one branch at a time and then water it in."

Instant house dressing, at £32 plus VAT for a 3m-high wisteria.

Tenderscare, owned and run by Andrew and Angela Hawksworth, was recently involved in the creation of English Heritage's first new garden at Walmer Castle. Box parterres were contract grown in troughs and specimen yews - semi mature at 3m high - were clipped into castle shape.

A little grand perhaps for the average buyers of hedging and screening plants who are looking for a quick growing barrier to provide privacy from neighbours.

Beech and hornbeam, already container grown to five or six feet high and trimmed, can be the answer, says Jim. You have got an instant hedge in the time it takes to dig the holes and put them in. With a healthy root system, there is less chance of failure.

"A lot of people already have a 6ft fence, so they don't really want a 12ft hedge as well because it takes up too much space in the garden," says Jim. "An evergreen small tree with a clear stem - like the Photinia Red Robin - is perfect."

Lazy gardeners can tour the 10-hectare nursery in a golf buggy and orders are delivered nationwide.

Even softening the edges of a terrace or basement patio can make a home seem loved and is more likely to impress potential buyers. And at least you can take this garden with you when you go, so the outlay is not wasted.

A Suffolk-based small firm at Pykards Hall imports handmade terracotta pots from Tuscany, with an aged texture. As they are made by a family firm, each one is slightly different, but all are frost-proof. A large, 60cm-diameter pyramid shape pot with a decorated exterior, costs £450, a plain one the same size, £400; both would hold a small mature tree. Smaller pots with a 38cm diameter are £48 and a medium size cylindrical pot would cost £125. All would give a terrace instant gravitas.

Much less gravitas, but a lot of fun is topiary. The trick with your



Angela Hawksworth, the brains behind English Heritage's first new garden at Walmer Castle

topiary, says Jim Dawes, is to keep it trimmed regularly. Because once you have lost the basic shape it is very tricky trying to regain it and you will end up with a fuzzy English box that could be anything.

Jim recently sold topiary shaped as two big ducks and two little ones which appeared recently at the Henley Regatta. But they come in all shapes for all tastes. A helicopter

pilot can have a topiary of his craft on the front lawn.

Almost any hobby from canoeing to music can be accommodated. A canoe, though, costs £1,635 plus VAT, so you would have to be keen. An elephant is a jumbo £2,745 plus VAT, but think of the impression it would make. Even a topiary of a dog is £875 plus VAT, but there are more modest creations. A wishing well

made of olive trees starts at £59.50.

"It is high value stuff," agrees Jim. "But it's a great framework. I wouldn't advise throwing thousands of pounds at a small garden. But modern gardens are boring. A few mature specimen plants hide the corners and angles make it look as though the garden has always been there."

And if you prefer an animal in the

garden which doesn't require a regular trim, there is just the chap at English Gardenware, which sells a wide selection of garden related products. The Pig Barbecue is a cheery soul and holds the charcoal in a basket on his back (£40 inc p&p).

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With retirement looming, many are turning to property as a long-term investment.
Mary Wilson reports

With the current uncertainty about pension funds and equities, a number of people are taking the view that bricks and mortar is the safest option for their pension.

"People buying property to provide their pension is something which seems to be quite commonplace now," says Jonathan Vandermolen, of Blenheim Bishop, a London agent.

"They are turning to property because they reckon the stock market has peaked and that is where many pension funds put their money. With property, people have control over their own destiny and residential property is currently the flavour of the month. Fifty per cent of new developments, which we sell, go as investment."

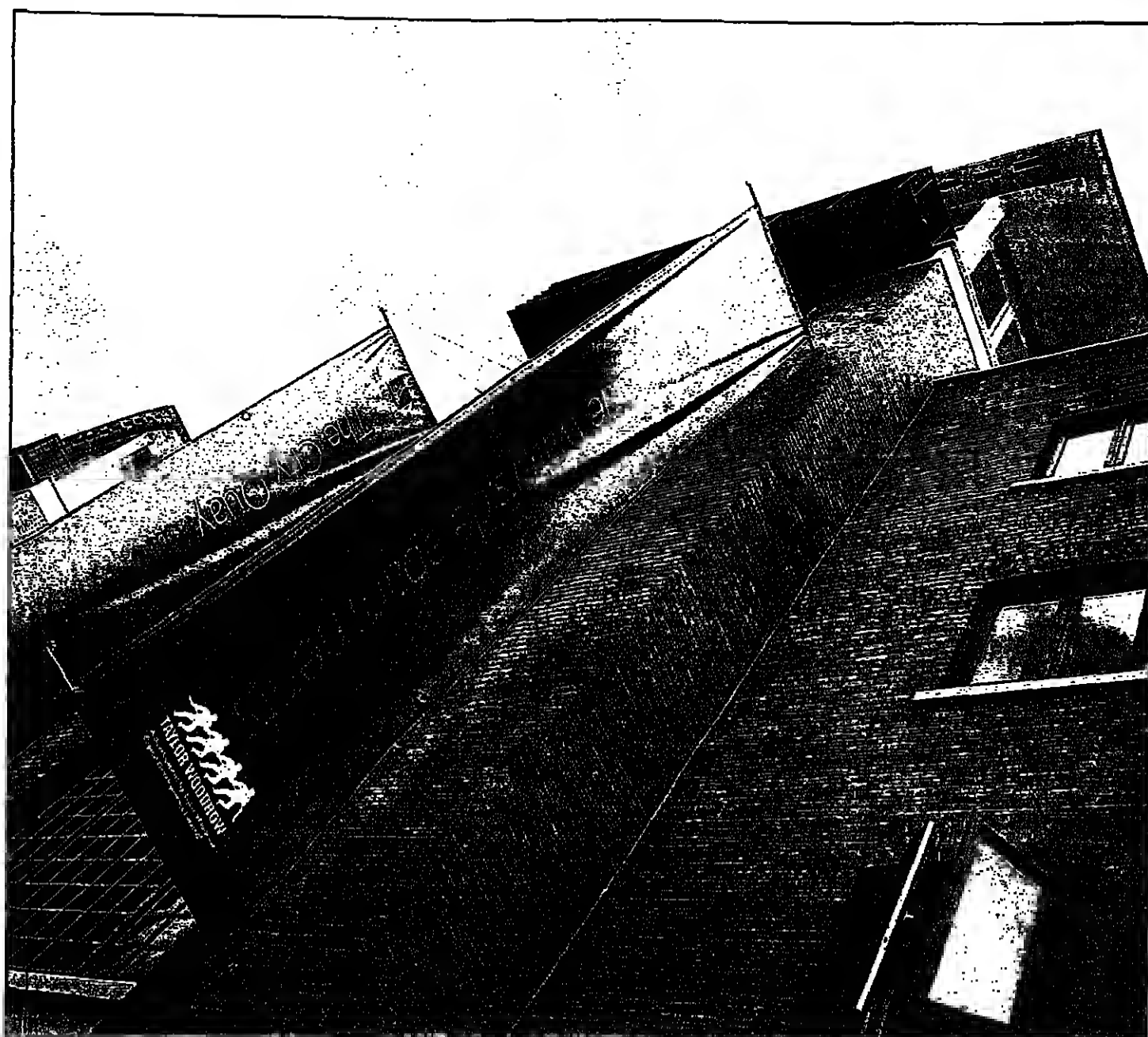
At one of the developments Mr Vandermolen is marketing, Kensington Garden Lodge in London's Queensway, which has valuable underground parking, 12 out of 18 apartments have sold to investors. "All the one-bedders, which give a higher return, went quickly and we only have eight two-bedroom flats left," he says. "These sell from £275,950 and the yield should be 10 per cent gross."

"If you are thinking long term, then the most important thing is that the property is close to transport, in a well established prime area and one where a tenant can pop out to get a pint of milk or his daily paper."

The Buy-to-Let scheme, launched in 1997 by Arla, the Association of Residential Letting Agents, has encouraged many individuals into the investment market. This has, so far, enabled 8,000 properties to be bought for the private rented sector, with mortgages totalling £133.5m being taken out during January to May 1998. Seven lenders are now on the panel, offering a wide range of mortgages.

The City Quay, a development by Taylor Woodrow Capital Developments, is another example of where investors are buying. This is situated beside St Katherine's Dock, just by Tower Bridge in London. Although the site is not yet finished, rental activity is particularly high and rents of £400 per week on a one-bedroom apartment and £600 a week on a two-bedroom apartment are typical.

"These rental rates are higher than average for the area," says Matthew Wilkins, of FPD Savills, which is letting the apartments at a reduced fee of 9 per cent. "This can be attributed to a combination of



Rents of £400 a week for a one-bedroom flat are typical at the City Quay, next to St Katherine's Dock, in London.

A nice little earner when you're 64

locality, quality and specification. It has a waterside aspect and each apartment is highly specified with state-of-the-art facilities and fantastic views."

Anyone buying here should not only see the capital value of their property rise, he believes, but achieve a good income, too.

"About 20 per cent have been bought for investment," says Sam Chapman, who is head of marketing at Taylor Woodrow.

"A number of people have bought for their own use later on, but are renting them out now. Many would not have bought if the investment potential wasn't so great."

Prices range from £230,000 for a one-bedroom apartment, to £710,000 for a penthouse.

At Regalian's recently launched Point West development on the Cromwell Road, London SW7, of the

188 sold, the majority of buyers have been investors. There will be a 70,000 sq ft David Lloyd leisure centre on three floors, to which residents will have a right to membership and a discount on fees.

"I expect that a two-bedroom apartment will see an 8-8.5 per cent gross return, with the smaller flats getting 10 per cent," says Jonathan Holman, sales director. Prices for the two bedroom apartment, currently released, range from £299,000 to £450,000, and there will be more one- to four-bedroom flats launched later in the year.

Kim O'Brien has been buying small flats as an investment for the last 12 years and she has just bought two one-bedroom studios at Point West. "Small units are the best. You get a higher yield and because you let them to single professional people, the wear and tear is less. I

have always seen my properties as my pension fund" she says.

Out of London, too, it is possible to find excellent investment possibilities. For example at Charles Church's development of apartments and town houses at Southborough Gardens in Surbiton, Surrey, purchasers are getting a good 10 per cent gross rental income.

"I am not surprised that the returns on investment are so high, because the scheme is close to London and in a secluded location," says Mandie Whelan, sales manager for Charles Church SouthEast.

At another of the company's developments of flats, in Camberley, Surrey, Bob and Joy Lucas have bought a two-bedroom apartment.

"I look at it as a boost to my income when I retire," says Mr Lucas. "I am 53 years old and am looking for early retirement. I particularly like these

apartments because they are attractive, built to a high standard and in a good position for the rental market - in the town centre, perfect for professional people.

"I bought the flat for £97,000 and expect to get around £775 a month, which is not too far off 10 per cent, less tax and so on. The local agents tell me they have a list of applicants waiting, so we should have no problem letting it after we complete, probably in December. I am taking a £40,000 buy-to-let mortgage, which will be covered by only half of the rent received. Once the mortgage is paid off that money will be an added source of income to my retirement pension."

Blenheim Bishop, 0171-495 1253; Charles Church, 01276 808080; Arla, 01823 896555; City Quay, 0171-481 9898; Point West, 0171-373 3100

All mod cons - at a price

New homes are going high-tech. And how. By Mary Wilson

THE HIGH-TECH home where you need only to touch a screen to turn on the lights, alter the room temperature, close the curtains or switch on the hi-fi has arrived.

It has been possible for some years to install Telguard, a magic box of tricks which does all this and also enables you to let people in via your telephone, whether you are in the living room or in an office 50 miles away.

But, until now, the cost has deterred all but those with mobility problems or those who felt they needed exceptionally high levels of security.

Julian Owen, a spokesman for the architects' network ASBA, says: "The problem at the moment is that high-tech gadgetry is very expensive and most people realise they will not get back what they have spent when they sell their home. I think it will happen when technology is more accessible."

However, one enlightened developer is starting to build homes packed full of wizardry. Michael McCarthy, managing director of Mullion Homes, says: "I aim to build quality 'intelligent' housing which will appeal to people 10 to 15 years away from retirement."

"It is our goal to produce very modern, flexible houses which will be stylish and sophisticated with a full range of automation."

"Garage doors which open when they recognise your car are a fun gimmick for a 40-year-old, but incredibly useful should you become disabled when older."

"Similarly, the Home Automation System (HAS), which enables you to turn on the hi-fi at a touch of a screen, would be invaluable for someone with mobility problems."

The HAS has a portable touch screen to operate the television, video, security, lighting, curtains and room temperatures. And in each house there will be a "smart" room which can be used as an office, a guest room to bed pulls down from the bookshelves) or an art and craft room (there is a sink for cleaning utensils).

The houses will also have a central vacuum cleaning and in-built spare cableways for future technology upgrades, a home exchange telephone system and underfloor heating.

Mullion plans three of these developments - two conversions of listed buildings and a new building project. Work is underway at the first of these, The Bibury Stud, in Gloucestershire, where six farm buildings will be converted into seven very large two/three bedroom houses. The third room is the smart room.

All this technology does not come cheap: the properties will be priced at £495,000 to £595,000. The next development will be

at Brackley, Northamptonshire, where five large Grade II* listed buildings will be converted into eight homes. Prices will range from £385,000 to £525,000.

The third will be five new steel-and-glass sea-front homes at Lytham, Lancashire.

In the grounds of Hanbury Manor Hotel & Country Club in Hertfordshire, 10 large country houses are being built by Leach Homes. Here, too, traditional looking houses will be fitted with sophisticated gadgetry: at least three phone lines, a central sound system wired to most rooms and a video link in the bedrooms and living rooms.

Security is provided by a closed-circuit television camera above the front door, exterior lights with sensors and photo-electric street lights which come on automatically at dusk.

Two of these five-bedroom houses are for sale at £745,000 and £795,000.

Banner Homes is also putting in a CCTV mini-camera over the front door. This is linked to the television distribution system which allows you to see who is at the door from any television in the house. It can also be used as a baby monitor. The cheaper of two five-bedroom houses at Hatch End, Middlesex, is priced at £615,000 and eight are for sale in Barnet for about £700,000.

Sea House, which was built five years ago overlooking Kinsale Harbour, in southern Ireland, has two computerised gas central heating systems and dual electric supplies to the kitchen and family room to accommodate US and European appliances.

It also has a computerised sprinkler system for the one-acre grounds, three television and radio satellite dishes and a top-of-the-range alarm system. Hamilton Osborne King is selling the three-bedroom house, with two separate cottages, for £821,6m.

In London, purchasers at Wimbledon Central, a new development of 66 apartments by Pathfinder, are given electronic key fobs which can be programmed to give access only to certain entrances and for only a limited period. Prices for the remaining two-bedroom apartments start at £234,000.

And at St Hilda's Wharf a four-bedroom penthouse has been designed with a six-line telephone and intercom system and full-surround sound system. Knight Frank is looking for £745,000.

Mullion Homes, 01285 657576. Poles Park, 01920 84460. Hamilton Osborne King, 00 353 21 271371. Wimbledon Central, 0181-946 8906. Banner Homes, 01628 536200. Knight Frank, 0171 480 6848.

Home comforts for servants of the church



Spirit level: The Rev David and Mia Hilborn and their children

Philip Meech

THE HILBORNS' first home was on a condemned council estate in Birmingham, followed by a Barratt house in the suburbs of Nottingham; now they live in a 1798 end-of-terrace town house in Clerkenwell, at the heart of London's "loft land".

Could this couple be media darlings or City types working their way up the rungs of the property ladder? Not a bit of it. The Rev Mia and Dr David Hilborn share the ministry at the City Temple in Holborn and the house comes with the job. "If we weren't ministers, there's no way we could afford to live here," says David.

In fact, they very nearly didn't. "We spent months exploring the area with the help of a church administrator, but it was quite clear that we weren't going to get much in Islington for the money the church had to spend. The house wasn't in the best state, but we knew it was in a very desirable area and a good investment."

When they moved in three years ago, the four-storey house had been roughly divided into four bedsits by the previous owner. While the house didn't fulfil certain criteria laid down by the United Reformed Church for its manse - for example three or four bedrooms, a dedicated study, two reception rooms and a kitchen large enough for a table - David and Mia could see its potential.

They suggested converting the basement into a kitchen/dining room and re-siting the main bathroom to the first floor where a large living room runs the length of the house. They moved in with relatives while the work was carried out but David kept track of the progress. Modernisation cost the church £16,000. The

Whether you're an inner-city vicar or a Highland minister, the house you live in will have come with the job. By Fiona Brandhorst

house was purchased from central funds for £178,000 and has enjoyed an increase in value in line with the popularity of Clerkenwell.

"Unfortunately, we can't afford the furniture or fittings to show the house to its full potential. It's like getting a really good car but the basic, bottom of the range model with none of the accoutrements," adds David. "But it's not what we work for; we're not a *Homes & Gardens* clergy couple."

The house isn't big enough for a proper study so they have one at the church, a 15-minute walk from their home. "It makes the divide between church and home very sharp," says David. "We can't just pop down and play with the kids after writing a sermon." Another consequence of city living is the small split-level patio garden - "just big enough for the children to work off their energy".

Choosing schools for David and Mia's two children, Matthew, five, and Alice, two, has been a problem. Inner-city schools are a mixed bag. However, they recently learnt that Matthew qualifies for a place at St Paul's Cathedral Pre-prep Choir School.

"We find it a fascinating and historic place to live," says David. "London is an incredibly pressurised place where you're swept along in the tide of business. It's not a great

place for spiritual life - you have to carve it out. So it's important to have a presence here."

For Christine Adams, the pace of life is about to change as her husband, the Rev Tony Graff, a Methodist minister, takes up his new appointment on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent. They are swapping their spacious Edwardian home in south London for a five-bedroom, 1960s chalet bungalow in a quiet street 10 minutes' walk from the beach. "The advantage of living in a church house is that you don't have all the hassle of buying and selling when you move," says Christine. "But if you're dead set on having a certain type of house, you aren't going to get it. You just have to make the most of what you're given."

The Methodist Church provides a house with carpets, curtains and a cooker and will pay for redecoration if required. The regulation study is also equipped with a desk, bookshelves and a wastepaper bin.

"We've bought a lot of our own furniture on the basis that we always thought we'd live in a reasonable-sized house," says Christine. However, their daughters' bedroom furniture will be too big to fit into the bungalow's smaller "children's rooms". Instead, the girls will share one of the larger bedrooms. Are Tony and Christine a little apprehensive

at leaving the city behind after eight years? "Yes. We'll be more reliant on the car, but it's only a few minutes to the park instead of 20 and the walk to school will be much quicker."

The Anglican Church has a greater stock of property, often held in great affection by parishioners because of historical associations or architectural interest. Millions of pounds have been made available for the renewal and improvement of these houses and, where appropriate, the Church Commissioners will give permission for large or unsuitable vicarages to be sold on the open market by auction, tender or private treaty.

The Church of Scotland has probably some of the most attractive manse in idyllic locations, many of which have become surplus to needs in recent times. A manse was recently sold on the Inner Hebridean island of Colonsay, set in two acres of woodland overlooking the sea and the hills of Jura and Islay.

New to the market this week is St Leonard's Manse, a large Victorian property within a conservation area in St Andrews with proximity to the coast and the town's famous golf courses. The main house has four bedrooms and an annex set in mature grounds. A stable block suitable for conversion to residential use is also for sale. Offers over £295,000 are invited, but conditions of the sale state that the word "manse" must not be used in the name of the house and it must never be used for betting, gambling or the sale of alcohol.

Details of St Leonard's Manse: 0131-225 5722

A touch of glass

A well built conservatory can be an extra room all year.

By Robert Liebman

A little bit of sunlight goes a long way toward making a conservatory scalding, even on mild summer days. Conservatories are heat traps. Victorian glasshouses were designed for plants and, being relatively tall, were easily and efficiently ventilated. Many of today's conservatories are supposed to be for people but are squat rather than tall, and their blinds and windows provide inadequate ventilation and temperature control.

"People don't realise how hot conservatories get in summer," says Mark Brinkley, author of *The Housebuilder's Bible*, "and they build one as if a conservatory is just a different sort of extension. It isn't. It is very specialised. For occasional use it is great. It is not a mainstream room."

Glass is more expensive than traditional building materials for walls and roofs, and their high proportion of glass also makes conservatories more costly to heat. "Many people choose not to use their conservatory when it is too hot or cold or dark, but that is an awful lot of time for a room that was expensive to build," Mr Brinkley observes. "Only about 1 per cent of new homes are built with conservatories, which are much more expensive than an ordinary extension."

But a well-designed and solidly constructed conservatory can easily be a mainstream room 12 months a year. "Be clear how you intend to use it," says John Sturdy, a partner in Lee Evans de Moubrey, chartered architects. "A conservatory can be little more than a greenhouse, which is an agricultural glazed structure primarily for growing plants, or a triple-glazed garden room whose environment is completely different from a greenhouse. Double glazing allows spring and autumn use, and triple glazing is for year round."

The trend is away from the all-glass conservatory of popular imagination. "If you limit the amount of glass, you limit the heat loss. You could have a glazed end with a conventional roof." Cutting down on glass also reduces material costs.

Mr Sturdy recently designed a conservatory for a Kent couple, David and Patricia, who live in the coach house they recently renovated. Much of the original brickwork has been retained, either for regulatory reasons or, like the entire rear wall, for privacy.

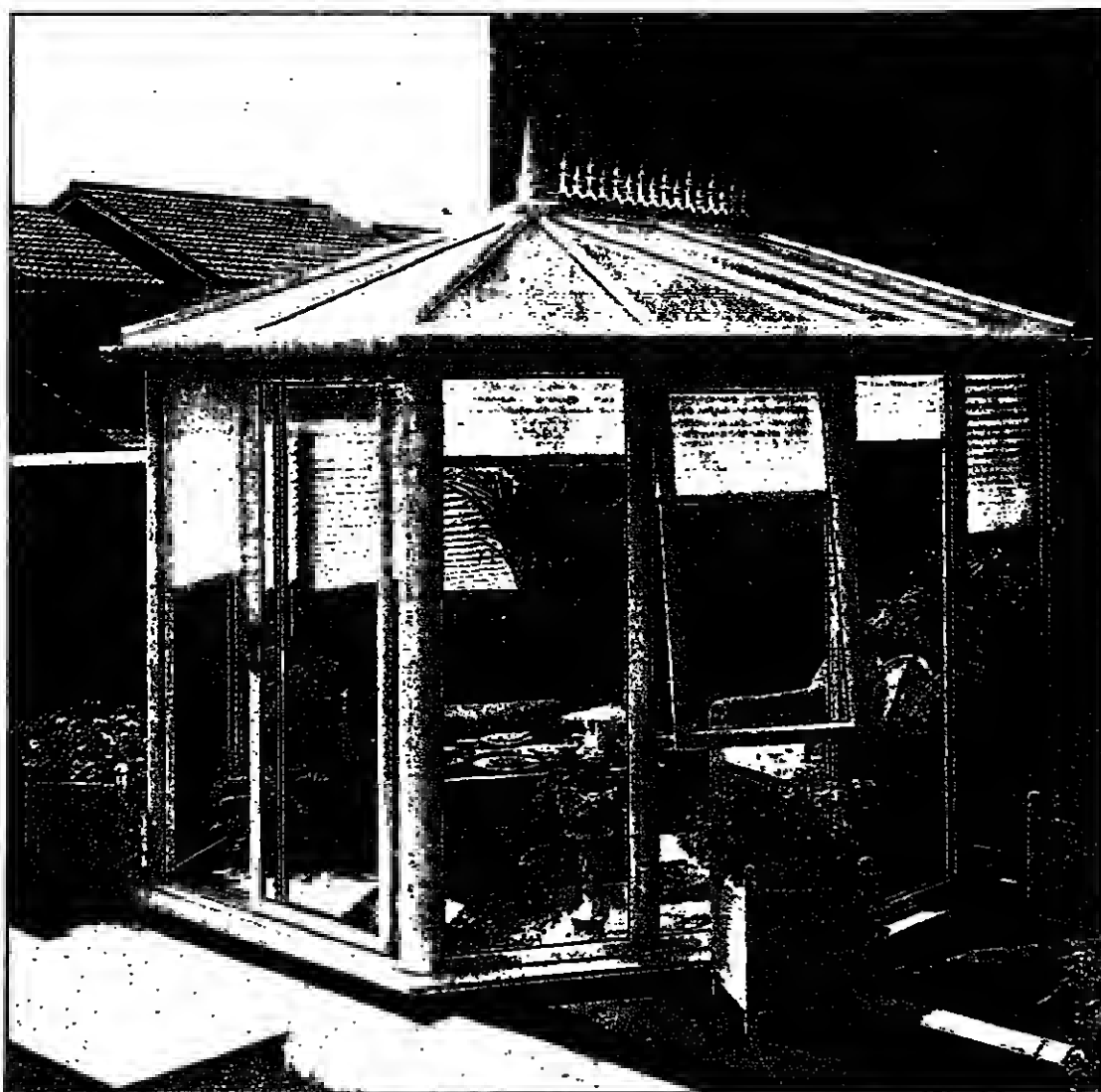
But brick and plaster definitely had to make way for glass. "The whole point of a conservatory is that it is not an extension. You get a completely different feel in it than in the rest of the house. An extension, even one with a lot of windows, is not the same thing," Patricia explains.

Their conservatory has under-floor heating, which is space-saving as well as energy-efficient, and low-emissivity reflective glass that minimises solar gain in summer and has excellent heat retention in winter. Seemingly expensive items such as Pilkington K glass tend to pay for themselves in the long term.

Summer is garden time. "A conservatory is not for the summer," Patricia says, but "summer" and "British summer" are distinct concepts. "We used the conservatory on Christmas Eve. We also used it a few weeks ago when we had a barbecue, and it suddenly became windy and chilly so we popped inside the conservatory. It was pleasantly warm."

Wickes supplies conservatories in 20 styles and 300 sizes, starting at £1,000 for a lean-to and rising to between £5,000 and 16,000 for more substantial and traditional-looking styles. All use "double glazed toughened safety glass" and are designed for DIYers. Construction costs are not included in the price.

Far more expensive are conservatories from the likes of Amdega, BAC and family firms such as Frost



A well designed conservatory can be a mainstream room 12 months a year

& Co; the Conservatory Association has a comprehensive list. A high-specification conservatory similar in size (15ft by 12ft) and materials to Patricia and David's would cost £35,000-£40,000.

Charles Frost says that his high-spec conservatories cost about £140 per square foot. A top-end conservatory can easily cost three or four times more than a Wickes conservatory of equivalent size.

The additional money buys superior design and materials. Your extra costs cover, among other things, different kinds of safety glass: laminated for the roof and toughened for walls. "Laminated glass breaks more easily but retains

the object that broke the glass. Toughened glass is better for walls because if a person were to break it, the glass would fall to the floor in chunks, not shards, which would cut them," Mr Frost explains.

"Ideally, a conservatory should face east or west, but you can make up for too much or too little heat by heating, ventilation and protection," says Janice Hennessey of Elkins Surveyors. In other words, conservatories that face in the other directions are feasible but more expensive.

"If you sell immediately, you probably will not recover your full development costs. You can maximise value by ensuring appropriate de-

sign and size proportions and that your garden really is large enough to support a conservatory."

Check references wisely when choosing a company. "Ask to see a conservatory they built some years ago," Ms Hennessey says. "This will give you some idea of how their work ages. Also check that any guarantee is insurance-backed in case they go out of business."

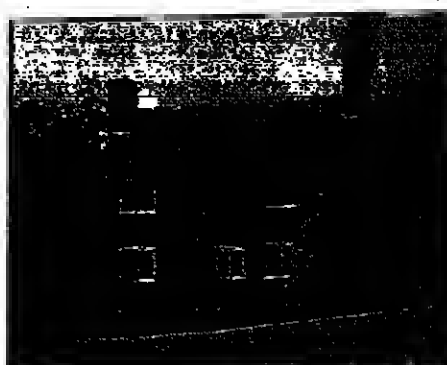
Conservatory Association: 0171 207 5873; Elkins Surveyors: 01322 626700; Frost & Co: 01787 640 808; The Housebuilder's Bible costs £18 including p&p from: 01223 290230; Lee Evans de Moubrey: 01227 784 444

THREE TO VIEW WITH ESTABLISHED GARDENS

CLUMP COTTAGE in Odiham, Hampshire has large, well-stocked cottage gardens, with masses of rambling roses and tubs of lavender and pelargoniums, and is screened from view by well-established hedges and trees. The two-bedroom house is set off a small lane in a semi-rural spot, a mile from the town centre. It has a 26ft sitting room which looks out over front and rear gardens, a separate dining room and a large country kitchen. Outside, there is a five-bar gate entrance, parking area and timber outbuilding. £225,000 through Hill & Morrison (01256 702892).



THREE CHIMNEYS, near Fulbourn in West Sussex, has large, well-stocked gardens which include a splendid white American poplar tree, tall hedging for privacy, flower beds and several varieties of clematis. The Grade II listed, three-bedroom house used to be home to George Kruger Gray (1880-1943), who modelled the reverse of the George Medal, among others. In the grounds is the 30ft-long barn which he used as his studio. The house dates from 1620 and has a 21ft sitting room with open fireplace and bookshelves, a 14ft study with beamed ceiling, and a dining room which is in the oldest part of the house, with oak beams and windows engraved by Gray. Guide price is £325,000 through Jackson-Stops (01730 812357).



LONES HOLE in Shalford, Essex is a Grade II listed, two-bedroom cottage with a particularly attractive garden. A five-bar gate guards the entrance, there is a stream flowing through the one and a half acre grounds, there are large lawns leading to the River Pant and its water plants and a wooded area with mown grass paths. There's also a wild area with silver birch, wild roses and plum and apple trees. The property comes with a greenhouse, summer house and aviary, garage and workshop. Offers around £220,000 through Trembath Welch (01371 872117).



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